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The New Commandment

AN INQUIRY INTO THE SOCIAL PRECEPT AND PRACTICE OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

PAGE
THE WORD AND THE WORLD - - - - 1

PART I

THE CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE

CHAPTER
I. THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST DAYS - - - 19
II. THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF THE PAULINE CHURCHES - 25
III. THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF ST. PAUL - - - 41
IV. THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES - - - - 66

PART II

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE

I. SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY FATHERS - - - - - 77
II. THE SCOPE AND METHODS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY - 97

PART III

THE CHURCH UNDER CONSTANTINE AND HIS SUCCESSORS

I. THE COLLAPSE OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATION - - 127
II. THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE GREAT CHURCH DOCTORS 135
III. PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES - - - - - - 157
NOTES - - - - - - 177

INTRODUCTION

THE WORD AND THE WORLD

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

INTRODUCTION

THE WORD AND THE WORLD

I

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of the Kingdom. Of necessity, therefore, it is a *social* Gospel. Its aim is not simply to snatch individuals out of the heart of a corrupt and doomed world. Rather, it seeks to re-fashion human society as a whole in conformity with the Divine purpose. In this sense Christianity was no new phenomenon, but merely carried on—with idealized aim and according to a new method—the central concept of Hebrew prophetic religion. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. i. 14). The message of the Baptist had been the same. This conception of a Kingdom of righteousness and peace, in which God's will should be universally recognized, His enemies confounded, and Israel should enjoy perfect happiness and security, is one of the prime master-thoughts of the great prophets of Israel. From the midst of the sins and sufferings of their own age they looked forward to the dawn of a better age that was to be. No less marked is their insistence on righteousness as the condition of entering into the blessings of this Kingdom. The prophet is before all else a preacher of righteousness. And this righteousness, we cannot fail to observe, is essentially a *social* righteousness. The Hebrew prophets are statesmen as well as religious leaders; they deal with the national life as a whole; the goal of their strivings and longings is a renewed and purified *Israel*. They do not ignore "politics." Rather, they seek to use "politics," to make them serve their end. That end is social justice—the vindication of the poor and oppressed, the cessation of wrong as between man and man and class and class. The hope of the prophets was handed on by them to succeeding generations: and the woes which befell Israel during the centuries preceding the coming of Christ only made it burn the brighter. It is even more prominent in the apocalyptic literature of later Judaism than in the prophets. The thought of the Divine Kingdom is, of course, closely bound up with that of the Messiah. But it is even more fundamental. For what is called the "Messianic age" may exist without a Messiah. This seems to be the case in Daniel vii., where the expression "one like unto a son of man" is to be understood as referring to "the saints of the Most High," *i.e.* the purified and regenerate Israel, not to a personal and individual Deliverer. In the later apocalyptic books, however, the figure of the Messiah assumes increasing prominence, notably in the Psalms of Solomon.

At the hands of the apocalyptic writers the prophetic idea of the Messianic Kingdom undergoes a change in two directions.[1] In the first place, it is more and more transcendentally conceived. In the view of the prophets, the vindication of God's will and the consequent transformation of society were to be brought about (at least in great measure) by human means and in the normal course of historical evolution. Now, however, they are regarded as the effect of a direct divine intervention resulting in a vast cosmic catastrophe. It is not difficult to understand why this was so. As the calamities of Israel increased, and its fortunes came to appear more and more hopeless, it must have appeared impossible to expect deliverance except as the result of an immediate "act of God." This supernaturalism is reflected in the way in which the character of the Kingdom itself is conceived. If sometimes it is represented as a sort of earthly Paradise in which the pious Jew eats of the fat of the land and tramples his enemies under his feet, at other times it is a state of spiritual blessedness in a Kingdom not of this world that is portrayed. "The Messianic hope thus spiritualized and transferred to the other world can scarcely be distinguished from the Hellenistic hope of immortality in Wisdom and Philo."[2] In the second place, the ethical change of heart which the prophets laid down as the indispensable condition of sharing in the blessings of the Kingdom is more and more externalized into a legal rigorism on the lines of the Pharisaism which dominated the religious life of the period, and even into a mere ritual and ceremonial correctness. From this point of view the teaching of Jesus (as of John) was a return to the teaching of the prophets. "Repent ye" (Mk. i. 15).

His appeal is always from the outward to the inward: nothing can take the place of ethical obedience. The narrow externalism of the Pharisees is repeatedly condemned. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. v. 20). The ruling principle of the righteousness which He demands is love—"the society-making quality." There are two great commandments—love of God, love of one's neighbour: and neither can be separated from the other. To the term "neighbour" He gives the widest possible connotation. A man's "neighbour" (so the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us) is anyone who needs his help. Even his enemies are to come within the wide embrace of the Christian's love. All men (even "sinners") can love those who treat them well. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them which curse you, and pray for those which despitefully use you" (Lk. vi. 27*f.*). The active expression of love is service. This was the lesson which the Lord taught His disciples the night before His Passion, when "He took a towel and girded Himself" and washed His disciples' dust-stained feet. "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jo. xiii. 14). The only privilege of the disciple is a privilege of service. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 25-28). In the same way, in the picture of the Great Assize in Matthew xxv., it is according as a man has or has not fulfilled the offices of love that he receives eternal weal or woe as his portion. Service to the needy is service to Christ Himself. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Here, then, is to be the foundation of the new society of the Kingdom of God—a loving and mutual service. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). Nothing is more deadly to the interests of the soul than the spirit of acquisitiveness. The distrust of wealth and the wealthy which is so noticeable a feature of the Hebrew prophets appears in the teaching of Jesus in a still more marked degree. As Jowett once said, "There is more in the New Testament against being rich and in favour of being poor than we like to recognize." This characteristic is specially prominent in the Gospel according to St. Luke. It is, however, by no means peculiar to him. In particular, all three Synoptists (Mk. x. 21, Matt. xix. 21, Lk. xviii. 22) record the trenchant words addressed by our Lord to the rich young ruler, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor," together with the warning that follows: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." This depreciation of riches is accompanied by a corresponding exaltation of poverty. Here indeed we must not lose sight of the fact, of which Harnack reminds us, that "in the Psalms and later Jewish literature akin to them the word 'poor' directly denotes those who have their hearts open and are waiting for the consolation of Israel. Jesus found this usage of speech in existence and adopted it. Therefore when we come across the expression 'the poor' in the Gospels we must not think without further ceremony of the poor in the economic sense."[3] Yet it seems scarcely possible to avoid the conclusion that our Lord regarded the poor as having a special claim to the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. The "Blessed are ye poor" of St. Luke (vi. 20) is at least as authentic as the "Blessed are the poor in spirit" of St. Matthew (v. 3). Indeed, it is held by many that the former is the original version of the saying.

So far there is substantial agreement among critics. The case, however, is very different when from the conditions of participation in the Kingdom we pass to the method by which its coming is to be brought about. Did our Lord conceive that method as apocalyptic or evolutionary? In other words, was the Messianic society to be ushered in by a supernatural catastrophe, or was it to be the result of the silent, gradual operation of those higher forces in human life which He came to liberate and reinforce? This question is the storm-centre round which has raged the great theological debate of the last generation. It is impossible to deny that the apocalyptic conception was that of most of our Lord's contemporaries: and from this many critics have argued that it must have been our Lord's conception too. But, as a recent writer has remarked, "It is more than usually unsound criticism to take the words of such a man as meaning merely what they would in the common talk of unreflective persons, who use words as counters and nothing else."[4] The originality of genius consists not in what it shares with the popular idea, but in what it adds to it. His comparison of the Kingdom to the casting of seed into the ground (Mk. iv. 26) would certainly seem to suggest that Jesus thought of its coming as natural and gradual, and not catastrophic. No doubt the eschatological element is very prominent in parts of the Gospels. But here it is not unreasonable to suppose that the primitive Church "spilled a little of the lurid colours of its own apocalypticism over the loftier conceptions of its Master."[5] The disciples could not be expected to escape the influence of prevalent ideas to the same extent as the Lord Himself: and it was only gradually, and in deference to the stern logic of events, that the Church came to share the broad, far-seeing serenity of its Master's gaze across the ages. The Church of the first age lived under the shadow of Christ's imminent Parousia: and this ardent expectation (as we shall see) inevitably coloured its social teaching, as all other departments of its doctrine and life.

II

How far are we justified in describing Christ's gospel of love and brotherhood as a new phenomenon in human history? We must guard against the error—so common with Christian apologists in all ages—of painting the condition of the ancient world in over-gloomy colours. As the leaven of selfishness was not entirely eliminated from the Church of the first days, so neither were kindliness and disinterested generosity wholly absent from the Pagan world of antiquity. Uhlhorn gives to the first chapter of his great work on *Christian Charity in the Primitive Church* the heading, "A world without love." This surely is to do scant justice to human nature, which was not radically different in ancient times from what it is to-day. The heart of man is never wholly selfish, except perhaps in a small minority of abnormal cases. Rather is it a battlefield upon which his selfish and his altruistic instincts strive for the mastery. Christianity has not created the higher side of human nature: though it has reinforced and developed it to an incredible extent. Thus we cannot deny that even in the ancient world poverty and misfortune excited sympathy and readiness to help. Even St. Augustine has to admit that Pagans were capable of doing kind actions.[6] The Fathers may have tended to regard the virtues of the heathen as mere *splendida vitia.* We shall prefer to see in them broken rays of the "true light which lighteth every man coming into the world."

At the same time, it is impossible to deny that, alike in its theory and in its practice of benevolence, the ancient world was incomparably behind the world of to-day. The latter may be far from Christian: yet it has been profoundly Christianized. Except in the case of certain diseased mentalities such as Nietzsche, Christ's ethical standards—and most of all in the article of brotherly love—are accepted as valid : even though our practice may fall lamentably short of our principles. In the world of antiquity, on the other hand, there was little or nothing to help a man to be kinder than Nature had made him. To our thoughts, goodness—and especially love of the brethren—is the crown and test of true religion. To the mind of the ancients there was no necessary connection between the two. Ancient religion, with its almost exclusive preoccupation with cultus, provided no outlet or stimulus to charity. Its influence, indeed, was rather to narrow than to expand men's sympathies. The enemies of a State were also the enemies of its gods—all the more reason therefore for using them harshly. The fellow-citizen alone had a claim to kindly treatment. As the influence of the old religions declined and philosophy rose to power on their ruins, a more humane and generous doctrine began to be taught. Socrates, for example, compared men to the members of the body which must assist one another mutually—a notable anticipation of the thought of St. Paul.[7] Yet the limitations of ancient philosophy were no less remarkable than its qualities. Aristotle is so far from recognizing the fact of a common humanity that he regards the slave not as a human being at all but as *ἔμψυχον ὄργανον*—a live tool.[8] Too much stress also is laid upon the interested motives which may prompt kind action. Moreover, the influence of philosophy was limited to a comparatively narrow circle—it was always the prerogative of an intellectual aristocracy : nor did it provide the moral dynamic by which alone its precepts could be carried into effect. Its practical influence, therefore, seems to have been small. This at least was the case until Stoicism came on the scene. It is one of the paradoxes of history that a view of life which found its ideal in the mortification of natural affection should have played a part second only to that of Christianity itself in humanizing the relations of men to one another. It was not, however, the boasted ἀπάθεια which produced this effect. Of this it is not too much to say, with the author of *Ecce Homo*, that "in every age the Christian temper has shivered at the touch of Stoic apathy"—and in the phrase "Christian temper" we may include the *anima naturaliter Christiana.* The glory of Stoicism lies not here, but in the intense moral earnestness which attached to its banner the noblest characters of the age: and most of all in the new sense of the dignity of human nature and of the worth of the individual soul which it introduced into the world. It was Stoicism which first pointed to the rational nature of man as a common quality transcending all distinctions of race and condition and linking all mankind into a single whole—which taught men to see the truth summed up in the old Scots saying, "A man's a man for a' that." "We are members of a great body," writes Seneca. "Nature has made us of one blood, has implanted in us mutual love, has made us for society (*sociabiles*). . . . Let the verse be in your heart and on your lips, *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.*" Again, he speaks of man as "a sacred thing to man" (*Ep. Mor.*, 95). The effect of such doctrines in breaking down the barriers which had hitherto separated men from one another is obvious. Formerly, the sense of national distinctions had blinded men to the unity of the human race as a whole. The same word (*hostis*) meant both "stranger" and "enemy." But now men were bidden to fix their eyes not on the things that divide, but on the things that unite them. The change was facilitated by the setting up of the vast empire of Rome, which confounded all nations in a common servitude, substituted for the old narrow idea of citizenship a citizenship of the world, and instituted a *carrière ouverte aux talents* by which the humblest subject might climb to the highest offices of the State. Again, the ancient world ruthlessly subordinated the individual to the community. The individual had no rights as such; but only as a member of some social unit—the family, the tribe, the State. In the eyes of the Stoic, on the other hand, the individual was not merely a means: he was also an end. The logical corollary of such a view was clearly, in particular, the extinction of slavery. Stoicism, however, failed to draw the conclusion. Yet if it accepted the institution, at least it did its best to ameliorate the conditions of it. The slave has his claims, no less than the freeman. "They are slaves, you urge," writes Seneca: "nay, they are humble friends. They are slaves: nay, they are fellow-slaves, if you reflect that fortune has the same power over both." "Let some of them," he continues, "dine with you because they are worthy: others, that they may become worthy" (*Ep. Mor.*, 47) We may note here that Epictetus, the most attractive figure among the teachers of Stoicism, was himself an ex-slave. And if the slave was not outside the pale of a common humanity, neither was the criminal. The remarkable humanization of the old barbarous penal code which marks the development of Roman law during the first two centuries of our era was the work of Stoic lawyers. Indeed, the word *humanitas* in the sense of "kindliness"—the treatment of men by men as men—was first used by the Stoics. The duties of 'humanity' are inculcated by Seneca in language so strangely and even verbally akin to that of the New Testament that many have been led to assume a definite borrowing on one side or the other. Yet when from the sphere of external action we pass to that of inward motive, we are at once conscious of the difference. The trail of the 'apathetic fallacy' is over all. Seneca, for example, writes thus in his *De Clementia* (ii. 5, 6): "Just as the gods are worshipped by religion but are dishonoured by superstition, so all good men will show clemency and mildness, but they will avoid pity. For this is a vice incident to weak minds which cannot endure the sight of another's sufferings. . . . The wise man cannot be affected by any disorder: his mind is calm and nothing can possibly happen to ruffle it. Moreover nothing becomes a man more than magnanimity: but magnanimity cannot coexist with sorrow." Even such sympathy as the Stoic can permit himself appears to be strictly limited to male adults. Epictetus honours the slave; but he has nothing but words of contempt for women and children. The latter he calls "snivelling brats." It must in fairness be admitted, however, that the Stoic's heart is often sounder than his head. His kindly maxims are not always easy to square with his somewhat perverse and forbidding creed.

The humanitarian movement which alleviated the lot of the slave and the criminal gave birth also to the first charitable institutions, in the strict sense of the word. In all ages of history, no doubt, kind-hearted men and women have stretched out a helping hand to the poor and distressed. And besides such merely private and individual well-doing, the ancient world was not without experience of organized giving on a large scale. But in practically every case the motive here was less the assistance of the recipient than the satisfaction of the giver. There lies the difference between Pagan *liberalitas* and Christian *caritas*. *Liberalitas* is the munificence of the patron: *caritas* is the selfless tenderness of the saint. In the ancient world just as to-day rich men would provide noble buildings or sumptuous entertainments for their fellow-citizens: and those holding high office were expected, as a matter of course, to furnish the public with lavish displays. But the motive of such provision was by no means primarily altruistic. Some desired the reputation of splendid giving. Others saw in such munificence a tribute to their own wealth or rank. A still larger number were no doubt actuated by the purely selfish motives of conciliating popular favour or conjuring popular dislike. Here, of course, is the explanation of the famous *panem et circenses* lavished on the Roman mob. They were a means of keeping it quiet—

nothing more. As such the Emperors took over the corn-dole (*annona*) from the Republic and continued it. The distribution was made without reference to the circumstances of the recipient. No doubt the well-to-do did not participate in it: but that was merely because they did not apply. On occasions of special rejoicing the Emperor would bestow upon the people *congiaria* or largesse. The splendid public banquets and games were also continued. It is unnecessary to point out how demoralizing all this was. The "work-shy" were encouraged; while the assistance given was insufficient for the really destitute. No poor-houses existed, and no hospitals. From the beginning of the Second Century onwards, however, we come across endowments for the support and education of poor children—called *alimentationes*.[9] The Antonine Emperors took much interest in these institutions, which gradually spread over the whole of Italy and possibly even beyond. Besides the assistance given by the State, wealthy individuals (*e.g.* Pliny) also provided endowments for their support: and, undoubtedly, they did a great deal of good before they were finally submerged under the flood of barbarian invasion. We may also notice in this connection the contemporary rise of *collegia* or guilds of artisans.[10] It is true that they do not appear to have made provision for their members in sickness, after the fashion of the modern trades-unions and friendly societies. "Never do [the colleges of artisans] accumulate funds to assist an unfortunate, or sick, member. . . . The feeling of mutuality does not seem to exist in these corporations."[11] Yet at least they expressed and helped to develop the spirit of brotherhood and co-operation. We shall see, too, later, the importance of these *collegia* in suggesting certain forms in which the charity of the early Church found expression. In all these directions we may trace the signs of that more humane temper which seems to have taken possession of the world about the time of the founding of Christianity, and, no doubt, in the providence of God was designed to be a *preparatio evangelica* for the far greater work to be accomplished by the Christian Church.

PART I

THE CHURCH IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST DAYS

The infant Church, after the departure of its Master, stood confronted with the problem of organizing itself to carry on His work. It was only very gradually, however, that the extent of this problem was brought home to it. At the beginning, indeed, there was virtually no organization at all. The Twelve, as the chosen companions of the Lord's intimacy and the depositaries of His teaching, were the natural leaders of the little community: and such functions as the maintenance of its corporate life might necessitate were discharged by them. There was no need to organize forms of worship, for in the earliest days the idea never occurred to the disciples that the forms and obligations of Jewish worship were otherwise than binding. So far from their loyalty to their Master making them sit lightly to such claims, it only made them discharge them more faithfully. Again, the conviction that He would very shortly return and inaugurate the new age made any kind of elaborate arrangements for the future appear superfluous. When the Messiah had restored the Kingdom to Israel, then would be time enough to find a constitution for it. At the same time the setting-up of the new society was by no means relegated entirely to the future. The early disciples never made the mistake of saying, "God will do everything, therefore we need do nothing." Even now, in preparation for the Lord's return, an attempt was to be made to realize a society framed according to the principles which He had taught. The complete triumph and vindication of those principles was not just yet: but a beginning could be made. Thus such organization as the infant Church received was rather social than cultural. It was to be the expression of the fact that it was, first and foremost, a brotherhood, a *κοινωνία* (Acts ii. 42).

This was the more necessary in that the Jerusalem community contained a large number of poor.[12] Our Lord's own personal followers were mostly poor, even though they seem to have included a certain number of well-to-do persons who helped to support Him and His disciples. Nor would their removal to Jerusalem and consequent relinquishment of their old occupations tend to make the poorer disciples less poor. It seems clear, too, that the additions to its numbers which the Church received in Jerusalem were mostly derived from the poorer class. The problem thus arose of their support. A generation later St. Paul was to appeal assiduously to his Gentile converts on behalf of "the poor saints at Jerusalem": but as yet the little Church in the Judæan capital had only the resources of its own members to rely on. It is evident that the claim was magnificently met. The well-to-do gave lavishly to the support of their poorer brethren. Indeed, so ardent was the spirit of mutual helpfulness that St. Luke appears to depict a definitely communistic society. "A man no longer spoke of his own possessions, for they had all things in common" (Acts iv. 32). And again, "All that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need" (ii. 44-5). Here, however, the writer's idealizing enthusiasm seems to have led him into a certain amount of exaggeration. This he himself makes clear in other parts of his narrative. Splendid gifts were no doubt made—as by Joseph surnamed Barnabas—who "having a field, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (iv. 36-7). But gifts of this sort were entirely voluntary. They were the effect of an impulsive enthusiasm expressing itself in such a complete renunciation of worldly possessions as that demanded by our Lord of the rich young ruler. We must bear in mind, too, the sense of the transiency of earthly goods which the expectation of the Lord's imminent return must have tended to produce. On the other hand, the Church in no sense *forced* its wealthier members to fling their possessions into the common stock : it was left entirely to the choice of the individual. The special mention made of the case of Barnabas in itself shows that it was somewhat exceptional : and St. Peter's words to Ananias and Sapphira put the voluntary nature of such gifts beyond doubt. "Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own ? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power ?" (v. 4). Somewhat later, too, we find Mary, the mother of Mark, the possessor of a private house—presumably of some size, seeing that meetings of the Church were held in it (xii. 12). There was thus no "community of goods" in the technical sense of the term, but a remarkably generous relief of the poor—so generous that "neither among them was any that lacked" (iv. 34).

How was this relief given? Acts seems to suggest a system of common meals (i. 14). We can scarcely, however, imagine that *all* the members of the Church habitually took their meals in common. This may well have been the case at first: but the problem of accommodation, which would not have been altogether an easy one when the Church was numbered by tens, would have become altogether insoluble when it was numbered by hundreds. Moreover, we are expressly told that the disciples broke their bread "at home" (ii. 46). But, in that case, what arrangements were made for the celebration of the Eucharist? It seems likely that this, in the first days, was intimately connected with the disciples' ordinary meals, which in themselves were regarded as possessing a quasi-sacramental significance. We may therefore, perhaps, assume that periodically (probably, as in Corinth in St. Paul's time, on the first day of the week) the disciples gathered together for an Agape or "love-feast," culminating in the solemn "breaking of bread" of the Eucharist. Possibly, too, as the number of converts increased, more than one such meal was held at the same time in different houses. There remained, however, the problem of those who were unable to provide their own meals "at home." Of these the widows were, if not the only, at least the most numerous type. Such persons could scarcely be expected to support existence on a weekly Agape. It is possible that at first these may have been entertained at the tables of those who, unlike them, were self-supporting: for there was no reason why the family meals of a Christian household should be strictly confined to members of the family. But as the number of converts increased, such an arrangement (if made) could not be conveniently continued. At any rate, in connection with the disputes between the Jewish and Hellenist sections of the community which led to the appointment of the "Seven," we hear of a "daily ministration" (vi. 1)—by which we may understand a daily table provided at the community's expense for the support of its indigent members. It is significant of the essentially *social* character of the young Church's life that the first recorded disagreement should have concerned its economic arrangements, as also that the first example of "differentiation of functions" should have had in view the better ordering of such. The charge was made at the request of the Apostles themselves, with the purpose of relieving them from the burden of merely material cares. "It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and serve tables" (vi. 2).

Tradition bids us see in the appointment of the Seven the institution of the Order of Deacons. There seems, however, to be no convincing ground for this belief. Nowhere are they called διάκονοι: and we need not infer that the word διακονία, which is used to describe their function, has anything more than a quite general meaning. If the Diaconate had thus early come into existence, it would be strange that it should disappear again immediately afterwards and leave no trace for a generation or more. It has also been suggested that in the Seven we may more probably see the first beginnings of the Presbyterate. But here again no certainty is possible. We shall be safest in regarding their appointment as an expedient to meet a local and perhaps temporary need, not as the creation of a permanent office, still less of an ecclesiastical "order" in the technical sense of the term. On the other hand, it is by no means impossible that the subsequent development of the Diaconate may have been materially influenced by the belief that they *were* "Deacons."

If the above account of the life of the Church in Jerusalem is correct, it is unnecessary to search for signs of Essene influence in the Christianity of the first days. No doubt resemblances exist: but these can be sufficiently explained by the "world-renouncing tendency" which marked both Essenism and early Christianity. Above all, the most characteristic feature of the Essene system—the common houses and monastic communism generally—is entirely absent from the Church in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly the example of the Essenes of Palestine, and still more of their prototypes, the Therapeutæ of Egypt, played an important part in the development of Christian monasticism. But the Christianity of the Apostolic Age was not monastic, nor even (as we have seen) properly communistic.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF THE PAULINE CHURCHES

THE lapse of time seems to have brought little relief to the poverty of the Jerusalem community. St. Paul himself tells us in his Epistle to the Galatians (ii. 9 *f.*) that when, after his conference with its leaders, James and Cephas and John, at the so-called "Apostolic Council," these gave him the right hand of fellowship and agreed to his exercising his apostleship among the Gentiles, the stipulation was made that his converts should "remember the poor," *i.e.*, the poor of Jerusalem. "Which very thing," he adds, "I was zealous to do": and his Epistles show how conscientiously he strove to fulfil his side of the bargain. There was, indeed, nothing new in this support of the poorer inhabitants of Jerusalem from outside. It had long been the custom for the Jews of the Diaspora to make contributions towards their maintenance[13]: and now that a breach had opened between the Christians and the main Jewish community, the Apostles at Jerusalem might well hold that the help which was no longer obtainable from the Jewish Dispersion must be supplied by the Christian. It has also been ingeniously suggested that a principal cause of the chronic poverty of the Jerusalem community may be found in its communistic experiments. We have seen that the account given in Acts forbids us to regard its manner of life as "communism" in the strict sense of the word. At the same time it is obvious that a system which encourages the maintenance of the poor at the expense of the better-to-do runs a grave risk of reducing all alike, in the long run, to a dead level of poverty. The danger of the infant Church's unshaken confidence in the immediacy of the Lord's return lay precisely in this—that it removed all inducement to long views and made a "hand-to-mouth" existence not only unobjectionable, but even desirable. Herein lies the significance of that *Interims-ethik* of which modern German scholarship has made so much. Viewed in the light of the approaching catastrophe that was to inaugurate the Kingdom of God, this world's work and interests seemed to be mere waste of energy—nay worse, a deliberate and inexcusable turning-aside from what would alone be profitable "in that day." The effect would be seen in a disinclination for work and a condition of morbid, restless excitement which would open the door to much mischief. That this was no merely hypothetical danger is shown by St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians. Here the Apostle is concerned to deal with just those very evils of which we are speaking. It is clear from the Epistle that the minds of the Thessalonian Christians had been much preoccupied with the thought of the Parousia, which they believed to be so near that they would all live to see it. Thus the death of certain of their number before its arrival had thrown them into a painful perplexity as to whether these would share in the blessings it was to bring. Difficulties had arisen, too, in the practical sphere. For this ardent hope had led them to neglect their daily work and to occupy the energy thus set free in a perpetual meddling with other people's business, incurring in consequence (so we infer) misunderstanding and unpopularity in the eyes of the heathen around them. The Apostle therefore writes: "We exhort that ye abound more and more, and that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business and to work with your hands, even as we charged you: that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and may have need of nothing" (iv. 10-12). Again, in the Second Epistle (written shortly after the First), he says: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread" (iii. 10-12). He reminds the Thessalonians that he was only demanding of them what he had done himself. "For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample to you, that ye should imitate us" (iii. 7*f.*). So, too, in the earlier Epistle he had written: "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (ii. 9).

We may conclude that the Apostle's exhortations were effectual: for if in these Epistles, which he had addressed to the Thessalonian Church itself, he had spoken of its qualities in terms of high praise, he is still more enthusiastic in what he has to say about the same Church in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. He holds up the Christians of "Macedonia" as a pattern to those of Corinth, and especially in the generosity of their contribution to the fund for the "poor saints at Jerusalem." He had not even to ask for their co-operation. They gave of "their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints" (viii. 4). And their contribution "was according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power"—in view of what the Apostle himself calls their "deep poverty" (viii. 2, 3). (May we not, perhaps, here again see the inevitable economic result of a pious neglect of work?) By thus emphasizing the liberality of the Thessalonians, St. Paul seeks to stir up a spirit of emulation in the Corinthian Church, which appears to have been less generously inclined, though it was probably much more well-to-do. At least, unless we suppose this, it is hard to understand the Apostle's urgent and reiterated appeals. They had indeed "made a beginning a year ago" (viii. 10); but after that the effort seems to have hung fire. St. Paul urges them now to "complete the doing"

(viii. 11), in a passage which may be described as the *locus classicus* of his writings on the subject of almsgiving. In regard to this passage we may note the following points :

(1) *The motive to which he appeals.* This is the highest motive of all—" imitation of Christ " and His self-sacrifice. " Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich " (viii. 9).

(2) *The need of voluntariness.* " Not grudgingly, or of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver " (ix. 7).

(3) *The principle of mutuality.* There must be " give and take " among Christians. " Your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want . . . that there may be equality " (viii. 14). Charity is one means of redressing the natural inequalities of human fortune.

(4) *The proportion of obligation to opportunity.* As Mr. Spurgeon used to say, " The question is not what a man gives but what he has left." " If the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not " (viii. 12).

(5) *The certainty of the Divine blessing on generous giving.* St. Paul, as a practical man, does not disdain the motive to charity which consists in the hope of spiritual advantage for the giver. But this motive is not overemphasized : and the advantage promised is purely spiritual. " God is able to make all grace abound unto you " (ix. 8)—" grace for grace," as St. John would say. There is no question here of a Pharisaic self-advertisement such as was so scathingly condemned by our Lord.

(6) *The necessity of responsible administration of charitable funds.* St. Paul would have small sympathy with such modern charitable organizations as " decline to produce a balance sheet." He had himself insisted on the appointment by " the Churches " of a " brother " to see that the money entrusted to him reached its intended destination, or, as he says, " to travel with us in the matter of this grace which is ministered by us . . . avoiding this, that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty : for we take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord but in the sight of men " (viii. 18 *f.* ; *cf.* 1 Cor. xvi. 3). He had too many enemies on his track to be willing to give to their malevolence more handle than he could help.

(7) *The need of reinforcing exhortation by organization.* Only so will a Church realize its maximum effort in the matter of almsgiving. It was as a sort of " organizing secretary " for the fund that St. Paul had sent to Corinth the popular Titus and the " brother " above-mentioned. The need of organized giving is still further emphasized in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, where we find what we should call nowadays a " free-will offering scheme " adumbrated, on the exceedingly sound and business-like principle that a system of small regular donations will produce more than a system of occasional large ones. " Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by in store as he may prosper." St. Paul seems to have made this system a regular part of the organization of the Churches which he founded. At least, he tells us that he had given

the same order to "the Churches of Galatia" also.

Since the passage in which the above principles are enunciated is written apropos of the collection for the Jerusalem community, we may infer that it was primarily in this connection that St. Paul wished to see them applied. The matter was obviously very near his heart: for in each of the "four great Epistles" the obligation is pressed home. It is not without reason, either, that the section on almsgiving in 2 Corinthians occurs in the middle of the Epistle that is concerned with the attacks made by Jewish Christians on the Apostles' authority. In view of their persistent hostility, it was all the more necessary to draw as tight as possible the bonds between the Gentile Churches and the Jewish Church of Jerusalem, in whose name St. Paul's enemies claimed to speak. We shall see later that a readiness to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. vi. 2) was one of the most effective means of linking together the original isolated local churches into one single Catholic Church. In this connection we may notice the emphasis laid by the Apostle in Romans xii. 13 on "hospitality"—no doubt as a means of promoting a sense of unity and solidarity among the scattered members of the Christian family. "The practical realization of this idea would demand that whenever a Christian went from one place to another he should find a home among the Christians in each town he visited."[14] But it was not only on behalf of the necessities of the Jerusalem Christians that the charitable instincts of St. Paul's Gentile converts were to be evoked and trained. If the claim to assistance of members of another Church was strong, the claim of the poorer members of the same Church would be stronger still. Here, most of all, there must be "equality"—at least, so far as a generous system of mutual aid could secure this. "Communicating to the necessities of the saints" (Rom. xii. 13). Furthermore, viewed from the standpoint of the common faith, the distinction between rich and poor, as between Jew and Gentile, bond and free, must become as though it did not exist. It was because this essential principle of the spiritual equality of all Christians was ignored that St. Paul was so indignant at the abuses which had sprung up at the Agapæ of the Corinthian Church. The practice prevailing at Jerusalem in the earliest days was still maintained at Corinth a generation later: and the members of the Church came together for a common meal followed by the celebration of the Eucharist. But instead of the meal being a genuinely common one to which all contributed and in which all shared alike, a custom had arisen by which those who were present brought their own food with them. Thus the well-to-do would fare sumptuously, while the poor brethren would have little or nothing to eat. Further, the rich would try and eat their meal before the poor arrived, so as not to be compelled to take it with them. "When," writes the Apostle, "ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper: for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in ? or despise ye the church of God and put them to shame that have not ? What shall I say to you ? Shall I praise you in this ? I praise you not" (1 Cor. xi. 20 *f*.). The remedy that he suggests is twofold. First, the feast is to be made a *common* feast by the Church-members "waiting for" one another ; secondly, the Lord's Supper is to be prevented from degenerating into a mere social banquet (after the fashion of heathen *symposia*) by their satisfying their hunger at home. It is clear from the situation here indicated that the taint of heathenism had been as yet very imperfectly eradicated from these Corinthian Christians. A lack of brotherly love seems indeed to have been the besetting sin of the Church of Corinth, revealing itself alike in a factious spirit ("I am of Cephas," etc.), and in snobbish distinctions between rich and poor. We are therefore not surprised to find the Apostle almost immediately afterwards emphasizing the unity of the Christian body by the analogy of the human body and its members, and then bursting into the wonderful lyric ecstasy of his Hymn in honour of Love (1 Cor. xii., xiii.). It is not unnatural to suppose that a Church such as that of Corinth, including as it evidently did persons widely apart in worldly wealth and intellectual cultivation, may well have presented problems and difficulties absent from Churches (such as those of Thessalonica and Philippi) the make-up of which was more homogeneous.

The question of St. Paul's attitude towards slavery will be discussed in the next section. We may confine ourselves here to registering the fact that slavery continued to exist within the Christian body itself. The recognition of a spiritual equality as between master and slave was not interpreted in terms of a duty to abolish the material relation. Of course, the question did not even arise in the case of the great majority of Christian slaves. These were dependent upon heathen masters, who would naturally be entirely indifferent to any theoretic views which their menials might entertain as to their position. Yet we cannot but observe that even the *desire* for emancipation on the part of slaves was officially discouraged—if, at least, we accept the more usual interpretation of 1 Corinthians vii. 21. Again, in the contrary instance of Christians owning heathen slaves, any inclination there may have been to set them free might well be crossed by an unwillingness to let them pass beyond the range of Christian influence. What, however, of those cases where both masters and slaves were Christians? It would be too much to say that emancipation never took place under such circumstances, and on conscientious grounds. On the other hand, it is clear that no *duty* to emancipate was ever laid down or recognized. This is put beyond doubt by St. Paul's manner of treating the case of Onesimus the runaway slave in his Epistle to Philemon. The Apostle asks for forgiveness for Onesimus: he asks that Philemon will receive him back "as a brother beloved" (16). But he does *not* ask that he will set him at liberty. It is true that he seems to give a hint to this effect: "Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say" (21). But it is no more than a hint: and if the concession is made, it will be made not as a duty to Onesimus, but as a personal favour to the Apostle. We conclude, therefore, that no sort of obligation existed in the matter. Under normal circumstances, even in a Christian household, the slave remained a slave, only he was humanely and considerately treated: while in the Church assemblies the relation of master and slave disappeared completely in an equality in the service of a common Lord and sonship to a common Father.

The information at our disposal is not such as will allow us to form a picture of the machinery by means of which the charity of Christians found practical expression. Probably very little machinery of any sort existed. The ministry itself had not yet had time to assume a fixed and formal shape. So long as St. Paul lived, his personal authority over the Churches which he had founded was paramount. All really important questions were decided by him; and only minor matters of routine were regulated on the spot. The chief position in the local Church belonged to such as Stephanas (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 17)—men whose generosity and services to the community had given them a sort of natural leadership within it. It is this kind of "ruler" who is probably denoted by the expression ὁ προϊστάμενος in Romans xii. 8 (*cf.* also κυβερνήσεις, 1 Cor. xii. 28). Under the general oversight and direction of these were certain other subordinate officers rendering such services as are generally described by the Apostle under the term "helps" (1 Cor. xii. 28). Of these services the care of the poor was doubtless one. Were those charged with it called "deacons"? If we exclude the Pastoral Epistles, the word "deacon" occurs only once in the writings of St. Paul. This is in Philippians, at the beginning of which the Apostle salutes the Church of Philippi *σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις* (i. 1). The meaning of this phrase has been the subject of much controversy. Do the two terms express definite offices or not? And if they do, what was the nature of the offices in question? It is hard to decide the matter with any confidence; but the great authority of Dr. Hort is in favour of the view that "St. Paul does not mean simply two different offices, but two contrasted offices or (to speak more correctly) two contrasted functions, 'with them that have oversight and them that do service.'"[15] In the same way, when Phœbe is described as a *διάκονος* of the Church at Cenchreæ (Rom. xvi. 1, 2), this is not necessarily to be understood as denoting that she held the office of a "deaconess," which (as Dr. Hort suggests[16]) would scarcely have accorded with the social prestige of one capable of being called a *προστάτις*. It need not mean more than that she was a faithful helper of the Christian body in that place. We may think of her as such an one as the Tabitha, called Dorcas, who is mentioned in Acts ix. 36 *f.*—a well-to-do Christian lady "full of good works and almsdeeds that she did." It is true that Bishop Lightfoot says of Phœbe that "she is as much a deacon as Stephen or Philip is a deacon." But the question precisely is, "How much is that?" On the other hand, the term, when once it had come into use, would inevitably tend to assume, as time went on, a more definite connotation : and it was in this way that " deacon " (and " deaconess ") came to acquire its later meaning of one of a class of ministers specially charged with the care and relief of the poor.

It is in this sense that the word is used in the Pastoral Epistles. It is impossible to enter here into the question of the authenticity of these writings : but as this has been so frequently denied, it seems well to sum up in a separate paragraph such information as they contain in regard to our subject. So far, at any rate, as their social teaching is concerned, there is no discrepancy between them and the Epistles generally admitted to be genuine. The solemn warning against the love of money in 1 Timothy vi. is merely an expansion of the thought which led St. Paul in Colossians iii. 5 to stigmatize " covetousness " as idolatry, and in Ephesians v. 3 to bid his hearers see that the same vice " was not even heard among " them. The Christian will be content with what he has and not (like the πλεονέκτης) perpetually strive for more. " Godliness with contentment," says the writer of 1 Timothy, " is great gain : for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out, but having food and covering we shall be therewith content. But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil " (vi. 6 *f.*). The exhortation, again, to generous almsgiving, as the proper use for a Christian's superfluous wealth, is repeated. " Charge them that are rich in this present world that they be not high-minded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed" (vi. 17 *f.*). The attitude towards slavery, too, is the same. It is true that a more developed stage in the evolution of the Christian ministry is indicated in the Pastoral Epistles than in St. Paul's undisputed writings. But it is at least not impossible that the requisite measure of development should have taken place within St. Paul's lifetime, unless, of course, we hold that the Apostle's first imprisonment was terminated by his death. Among the qualities demanded of ἐπίσκοποι or "elders" is "hospitality" (iii. 2)—no doubt because it fell to them to act as representatives of the community in its relations to other Churches and their members. With regard to διάκονοι, we are not actually told that their business was to visit and relieve the poor. But it is natural to assume this : and the supposition is confirmed by the nature of the defects against which it is represented as specially necessary for deacons to be proof—viz., gossiping and dishonesty (iii. 8, 11).[17] The temptation to these two faults in the case of officials whose business it was to be much in other people's houses and to handle other people's money is obvious. Besides deacons there were also deaconesses,[18] who (we may suppose) discharged for women the offices which the male deacon rendered to men. The fact that in the Epistle to Titus no mention is made of *διάκονοι* suggests (though it does not prove) that "the Christian communities of Crete were not yet mature enough to make the institution as yet desirable."[19] The function of a deacon was, after all, one that could quite well be discharged by any ordinary member of the Christian body: nor need the establishment of an order of deacons have made it in any wise necessary for such private individuals to cease their *διακονία*. The passage dealing with "widows" (1 Tim. v. 3 *f.*) is interesting as exhibiting the beginnings of what was to be a regular institution of the Primitive Church—the "Viduate." Already a definite class of "widows" is indicated in which suitable candidates are "enrolled." The qualifications for such enrolment are carefully laid down. Chief among them ranks the due performance of various kinds of charitable offices—the bringing up of children (*i.e.*, orphans), hospitality to strangers, the "washing of the saints' feet," the relief of the afflicted. Clearly, then, the discharge of duties of this kind was regarded at this time as a normal part of the Christian life. The Church undertook the obligation of supporting widows when these had no relatives of their own to provide for them. If they had, they were not "widows indeed": and the Church must not be "burdened" with their support, but must leave the responsibility to those who "had" them, *i.e.* in their family. "If any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. v. 8).

Such ministry as was exercised by widows was exclusively a ministry of prayer. "She that is a widow indeed . . . continueth in supplication and prayer night and day" (*ibid.*, 5). It is not till much later—in fact the third century—that we find widows discharging the functions of "church-workers."

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF ST. PAUL

If we desire to understand the social teaching of St. Paul in its widest and deepest aspects, our text-book must certainly be the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is true that the Pauline authorship of the Epistle in question has been, and remains, the subject of much dispute—more so, in fact, than that of any other of the Apostle's alleged writings, the Pastoral Epistles alone excepted. A question, however, so wide and complicated cannot well come within the scope of a work like the present. The writer must content himself with asking leave to assume that "Ephesians" is a genuine work of St. Paul. It may fairly be urged that the question is at least an open one: and that the arguments in favour of the contrary view are far from amounting to demonstration. The view here adopted is one that has the support of the majority of the most distinguished English authorities, however it may be with the great names of German criticism. It may also be argued that even if "Ephesians" was *not* written by St. Paul, yet it is at least thoroughly Pauline—the work of a disciple dominated by St. Paul's ideas and profoundly penetrated by St. Paul's spirit, who merely draws out and develops the implications present in the Apostle's own writings. Whether these implications were unfolded by St. Paul or by a member of his school is (from our point of view) of secondary importance. How close is the agreement between the social doctrine of " Ephesians " and that of the undisputed Epistles will be seen as we proceed.

The key-thought of the Epistle is the thought of *unity*. The cosmic process starts from unity and is to issue in unity. The purpose of redemption is to restore the primal unity which sin has marred. In the Divine intention all men—nay, all created beings—were to be one. All men alike are the handiwork of the same Creator—" God who created all things " (iii. 9). This thought of the unity of creation is further developed in the sister Epistle to the Colossians. The principal of this unity is Christ—" the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible . . . all things have been created through him and unto him : and he is before all things, and in him all things consist " (Col. i. 15 *f.*). And as all men are the creatures of a common Maker, so they are all sons of a common Father. The Divine Fatherhood is, indeed, the archetype of all fatherhood. " God is Father . . . from whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named " (Eph. iii. 15). Thus, if distinctions and discord exist, this is not in accordance with, but contrary to, the Divine will. It is man's self-will, man's pride, man's exclusiveness that are to blame. In this way the original Divine purpose is checked and impeded. But it is not frustrated. God still means to make all men one. Even if in the past

He has seemed to recognize (as in the case of the distinction between Jew and Gentile) the divisions that exist among men, yet it was only with the object of transcending them in an ultimate unity. The "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves" is nothing less than "to gather together [*or* sum up] in one all things in the Christ" (i. 10). One in Christ they were at the beginning : one in Christ they shall again be at the end.

In this insistence upon unity it is natural to see the influence of Stoicism. How that influence was mediated, whether it is to be regarded as direct or indirect, is uncertain. But it must not be forgotten that St. Paul was a native of Tarsus : and that Tarsus was especially important as a centre of Stoic teaching. In any case, the ideas of Stoicism were "in the air": and no mind so essentially receptive as St. Paul's was likely to escape their influence. Prominent among these ideas was (as we have seen) what we may call the Stoic "Universalism" or "Cosmopolitanism." Stoicism was the first philosophic system to rise to the concept of "humanity"—of a common quality in all men transcending every distinction of race, condition and culture—and of the consequent possibility of an ideal "city of Zeus," in which all these distinctions should cease to exist and be merged in a common brotherhood of man. And what Stoicism did in the intellectual sphere, the Roman Empire did in the practical. The effect of a single highly centralized authority, stretching over the whole extent of the civilized world, in breaking down the sense of racial, political, and social differences, can hardly be overestimated. The Empire was at least an adumbration of that universal State of which the Stoic dreamed. In it men found themselves one, if only in a unity of subjection. That St. Paul was profoundly influenced both in his thought and action by that colossal and overpowering entity, the Roman imperial system, is indisputable.[20] He was intensely proud of his Roman citizenship—a citizenship which in the strict sense of the term was a "citizenship of the world." The Roman political divisions, the great Roman roads, were both made to play their part in the carrying out of his world-wide mission. And the climax of that mission must be enacted on no less a stage than the imperial city itself. "After I have been there [*i.e.*, at Jerusalem], I must also see Rome" (Acts xix. 21). We shall not fail to see a deep significance in the fact that the thought of unity is a special characteristic of the Epistles written during the period when the Apostle was a prisoner in Rome the Eternal—at the centre of the vast network of arteries and veins through which the life of the great Empire pulsed and ran perpetually, and surrounded by all the evidence and symbols of world-sway. Here most of all it must have been natural to "think imperially." Critics have frequently alleged, as a ground for denying the Pauline authorship of our Epistle, that in it the term "Church" is used, not (as in the indisputable Epistles) in the sense of one local congregation, but in that of a single universal Church. Why, however, should the thought of the Apostle himself have been incapable of taking this leap? What more natural response to the stimuli constantly present to eye and ear and mind? If his limbs were bound, the restless, impressionable, planning intellect was always free: and a prison-house gives fine scope for meditation.

The ideas of a common humanity and the consequent brotherhood of all men—taught by Stoicism, symbolized if not embodied by the imperial system—were given shape and substance by the teaching of Christianity. Catholicity was a "note of the Church" from the beginning. All were sons of the one Father; Christ's blood was shed for all; the Gospel must be proclaimed to "the whole creation." Again, the sense of unity and fellowship was the very mainspring of the Church's existence. However it might be elsewhere, within its sacred enclosure all were equal, all were brethren. From the Church these ideas have passed into the very stuff and texture of modern thought. "The brotherhood of man resting on the Fatherhood of God" has become an axiom, even a platitude. Yet, like most platitudes, it is a truth honoured with the lips rather than in practice. It is the great mistake of much modern idealism to make words take the place of things: and nowhere more than in regard to the principle of human brotherhood. Men do not become brothers merely by calling one another so. If brotherhood is to become a reality and not only a name, there needs first to be eradicated a narrowness of vision, a hard selfishness, which are only too characteristic of average human nature. Liberty is not the only member of the famous revolutionary trinity in whose name monstrous crimes have been committed : and to-day it is odd how often the word " fraternity " is to be found on the lips of those who proclaim the " class war." The modern man, again, may justly pride himself on the final disappearance from the civilized world of the distinction between " bond and free " : but the distinction between " black and white " still persists and is, ultimately, no less disloyal to the idea of human brotherhood. The truth is that men are always glad enough to claim equality and fraternity when these things mean advantage for themselves. When they mean not advantage but concession and sacrifice, they are much less enthusiastic.

Thus, however alluring the vision of a universal brotherhood of men may be, enormous difficulties bar the way to its fulfilment. These difficulties, so often ignored by modern idealists, are fully taken into account in the conception of the Divine economy which meets us in Ephesians and Colossians. According to that conception, the discord that sin has introduced into the world is such that the ultimate goal of the Divine purpose, the unity of all things, can be achieved by nothing less than a new creative process. Of this second creation the agent, the formative principle, is the same as that of the first—the Eternal Son of God, or (as St. John would say) the Logos. It was with the purpose of thus renewing a fallen human nature that the Eternal Son " took the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men "—so that, sharing in His life and there finding the principle of their unity, men might become one " in Christ." It is in this idea of a New Creation that we are to find the key to the development of thought with regard to Christ's Person that St. Paul's later Epistles exhibit in comparison with the earlier. That there *is* a development is unquestionable. The pre-existence of Christ is indeed clearly implied in both groups of Epistles—the earlier no less than the later. But in the earlier Christ appears as the Heavenly Man : while in the later His Person acquires a cosmical significance. The transition, however, is not really hard to explain. It was, after all, only the result of a more profound reflection upon the implications of the Apostle's personal experience and that of Christians generally. Such reflections had already led him to see in Christ the Second Adam—the fount and principle and Head of a new humanity. " If any man be in Christ [there is] a new creation " (2 Cor. v. 17). But He who re-creates must be the same as He who creates : for Life can have but one source. Thus " the Apostle's doctrine of the Logos teaches us to regard the Eternal Word as holding the same relation to the Universe which the Incarnate Word holds to the Church. He is the source of its life, the centre of its development, the mainspring of all its motions."[21] It is here then—in meditation upon, and in interpretation of, an ethical experience, and not in metaphysical speculation for its own sake—that we are to find the source of St. Paul's later Christological teaching. No doubt his thoughts on the subject were stimulated by—and in a measure received their form from—such early Gnostic imaginings as those which held sway at Colossæ.

But their root lay in the Apostle's own heart—in the sense of an incredible deliverance, of a personality in process of daily being fashioned anew, of a life lived "in Christ" and finding in Him a force potent as that which gave the worlds their birth.

The whole Gospel of St. Paul (as Bishop Westcott was never weary of pointing out to the young men who sat at his feet) may be summed up in these two words—"in Christ." Christ is the Head of the new Humanity—the source and principle of that "new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24 *f.*; *cf.* Col. iii. 10). It is "in Him" only that men can find the power to correspond with the Divine purpose for themselves, and thus to take their part in carrying into effect the Divine purpose for mankind. This correspondence (or "salvation," as St. Paul calls it) is not to be achieved by mere human effort. "It is the gift of God." "For by grace are ye saved." To each man "in Christ," that is to say, there comes "grace"—the regenerative power of a new life, which is to be seized and appropriated "through faith" (Eph. ii. 8). "God being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, hath quickened us together with Christ and raised us up with him and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (ii. 4 *f.*). In the power of that life man is re-created, fashioned afresh. Thus "we [*i.e.* the saved] are his [*i.e.* God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (ii. 10). Of this life *all* men may partake. Otherwise the purpose "to gather together all things in Christ" would be unfulfilled. The old distinction between Jew and Gentile therefore has been done away. The distinction had been formerly recognized by God: and had been a very real and vitally important thing so long as that recognition lasted. *How* real and important it is hard for us to realize who live in these far-off days. The controversy which fills the earlier Epistles of St. Paul was already beginning to be of merely historical interest even when Ephesians was written. To the man of the twentieth century (unless he is blessed with far more than an average share of historical imagination) it seems frankly "much ado about nothing." But the fact that a fight is over does not mean that there was never anything to fight about. The Gentile might be blissfully unconscious of his disabilities under the old Covenant: but the Jew was intensely conscious of his privileges. And St. Paul was a Jew. If he believed that the privileges of the old Israel had been abolished, it was not that he had never regarded those privileges as worth having. They had been tremendous as long as they had lasted. The Apostle makes this clear by his picture of the gloomy plight of the Gentiles under the former dispensation. "Wherefore remember that aforetime ye [the Gentiles] . . . were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (ii. 12). But now the distinction has been done away: the peculiar privileges of the Jewish people are at an end as the result of the coming of the Incarnate Son of God. "Ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who hath made both one, and broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the enmity . . . that he might create in himself of the twain one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the Cross . . . for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father. So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God" (ii. 13 *f.*). This reconciliation is "the mystery of Christ which in other generations was not made known . . . as it hath now been revealed: to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body" (iii. 4 *f.*).

Thus a new era opens in the history of mankind. The work of redemption enters on a new phase. Yet the method of the Divine working under the new dispensation is the same as under the old. That method is the method of *election.* If God had made Israel His Chosen People, it was not that He cared for them more than for other nations. It was simply that the few were chosen in order that the many might be blessed. God's purpose from the beginning had been a purpose of love for all mankind. "In thee [*i.e.* in Abraham and his seed] shall all families of the earth be blessed." And as it was then, so it is now. The Church is the new Israel, a body at present restricted indeed, but destined to be the organ of salvation for the whole human race. Nay, the blessing that comes through the Church is not confined to mankind, but extends to the universe of created being. " To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God " (iii. 10). The Church is the sphere of operation of the Divine life mediated through Christ its Head. " God gave him to be Head over all the Church which is his body, the fulness of him that all in all is being fulfilled " (i. 23—so Robinson translates). That is to say, " without the Church Christ Himself is in a sense incomplete. Through the Church He still lives and moves among men : and as the Church grows towards completion, the Christ grows towards completion : the Christ Who in the Divine purpose must be 'all in all.' "[22] For the Church is intended to expand until it comprises nothing less than the whole of humanity. So long as its qualities and characteristics are those of a section only of the human race, so long is its work incomplete. In St. Paul's thought, as Dr. Hort says, " ideally the Ecclesia was co-extensive with humanity : all who shared the manhood which Christ had taken were potentially members of the Ecclesia : its ideals were identical with the ideals of a cleansed and purified humanity."[23] His own aim is " to present *every* man perfect in Christ " (Col. i. 28).

Men are thus to be saved, not as isolated individuals, but in and through a society. Man is by nature a " social animal," and needs the contact and influence of others for his development. Now the Church (at least in so far as it corresponds to the Divine plan) is the ideal society. It is such because it rests upon the one and only foundation of a true human life—that is to say, reconciliation with God. Men are to be re-united to one another by being re-united to God. The effect of sin is to sever both man from man and man from God ; "in Christ" both separations are done away. Thus the Church lives and grows by means of the Divine life imparted to it through Christ. It does not repose on the shifting, insecure foundation of mere human good-will : but on the might and love of God Himself. It is in virtue of the power and grace that proceed from that love that it is enabled to overcome the centrifugal forces of selfishness and pride which so perpetually prove the ruin of ordinary human associations. That is why the Apostle prays for his hearers "that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man : that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith : to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 16 *f.*). So they will "grow up in all things into him which is the Head : from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together . . . maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (iv. 15 *f.*).

We have dwelt at such length on the intellectual and dogmatic background of St. Paul's thought because only so can we obtain an adequate grasp of his practical teaching. It must be repeated that St. Paul never speculated for speculation's sake. His ultimate object is always practical. For him dogma is intended to issue in life—otherwise it is wholly unprofitable. Perhaps it is a little too much to say with Dr. McGiffert that "it is a mistake to suppose that the Epistle to the Ephesians was written with any speculative or dogmatic purpose. Its aim was exclusively practical."[24] It would certainly seem to have been part of the Apostle's object in writing it to provide a crowning exposition of his maturest and deepest thought. On the other hand, the last three chapters are no mere appendage, no mere concession to the convention which demands a hortatory "word in season." The two parts of the Epistle are indissolubly connected. But perhaps it may be said, "Is all the theology of the first part really necessary? Contrast these elaborate theorizings of St. Paul with the inspired simplicity of the teaching of Jesus." Such comparisons are frequently made to-day. Yet, is St. Paul, after all, doing anything more than working out in his own way an essential but frequently ignored feature of his Master's teaching? Nothing could be more untrue than to represent our Lord as a mere apostle of human equality and brotherhood. Unless we are to tear the Gospels to pieces, it is impossible to ignore the extent to which (even in the presentation of the Synoptic writers) the teaching of Jesus is focussed upon His own Person. He makes a claim which would be intolerable in a mere human teacher—the claim to be the exclusive source of moral inspiration to His followers. But what else is the meaning of St. Paul's "scheme of salvation," of his ceaseless insistence on the "life in Christ"? The explanation is the same in both cases. Human brotherhood is only possible "when we begin to live from some centre greater than ourselves. It is only in Christ that men can permanently and satisfactorily learn to love one another when racial and educational and personal antipathies make for separation and not for unity."[25]

The fact, however, that the unification of mankind is thus dependent upon the operation of Divine grace by no means removes the necessity for human effort. The will of man is free: he can decide whether he will co-operate with God's purpose or not. God does not force men to do His will, though He enables them to do it, if they so desire. Thus St. Paul is emphatic as to the need of cultivating the *temper* of unity. He begins the practical part of the Epistle with an exhortation to this effect: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the vocation wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love: giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (iv. 1 *f.*). Lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance—here, one after the other, are the characteristic notes of the Christian ethic, as opposed to the ethic of antiquity and, indeed, of unregenerate human nature generally. For such qualities the pagan would have had no respect. In his eyes they were not virtues at all, but vices—the vices of the slave. So too, in our own day, the neo-paganism of Nietzsche has spoken with withering contempt of the religion which has raised them to the first rank among moral excellences. Yet experience is ceaselessly teaching men that only by such mutual service and co-operation can a true and lasting common life be built up : just as it is the lack of these things that is perpetually proving the ruin of every kind of human association. Sacrifice means life, selfishness means death—for the individual and the community alike. So St. Paul exhorts his readers to " submit themselves " (Eph. v. 21 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 16). The Apostle of liberty is also the Apostle of subordination. Liberty does not mean the power to do what one likes, regardless of others : but ability to co-operate freely and joyfully for the common good. It is in this connection that the Apostle develops the metaphor of the Body. As is well known, this metaphor is used in a somewhat different form in Ephesians from that which we find in 1 Corinthians and Romans. In both cases the Church is described as " the Body of Christ " : but at the same time two differences are to be noted. In the first place, the Ecclesia or Church means the local congregation of Christians in the earlier Epistles : whereas in the later it signifies the one universal Church. Secondly, the relation of Christ to the Church is differently conceived. In 1 Corinthans and Romans He is the Whole Body : in Ephesians and Colossians He is the Head of the Body. The difference, however, is not of much importance from our point of view. The later conception does not change, but only adds a further idea to, the earlier, which indeed is found side by side with it in Ephesians.[26] The main point of the metaphor is clear. It is best summed up in St. Paul's own words: "Even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Rom. xii. 4). The ideal of the Church's life, that is to say, is an ideal of unity in diversity. The life by which the Church lives is one; its members together form an organic whole; yet this is compatible with—nay, it involves—a wide differentiation of function. "The body is not one member, but many. . . . If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" (1 Cor. xii. 14 *f.*). The welfare of the whole requires the loyal co-operation of the different parts: "According to the working in due measure of each several part" (Eph. iv. 16). None can claim to be more necessary than the others, or despise another as superfluous. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. xii. 21). It is true that just as some parts of the body are more "honourable" than others, so within the Church it is necessary that some should take the lead, while others should remain subordinate. But whatever the function may be, whether higher or lower, in every case it is to be exercised with reference not to the interest of the individual, but to the interest of the whole. "He gave some to be Apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"—not, however, for their own sake, but—"for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of *ministering*, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 11 *f.*). It is only by the triumph of this attitude of mind that the two great perils attending all associations of men with one another can be avoided—on the one hand, the tendency of leaders to use their authority for their own personal interest, on the other the tendency of the rank and file to be jealous and insubordinate and so to make all united action impossible. The moment that any one part begins to act as though it were an independent unit and not part of the whole, the unity of that whole is broken, and disaster follows. "United we stand, divided we fall." If the welfare of the whole is to be secured, it is necessary that "there should be no schism in the body : but that the members should have the same care one for another." So vital, indeed, is the connection between the various parts of the body that the injury of one is the injury of all, the benefit of one is the benefit of all. "And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it : or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26). From this it follows that he who inflicts injury on a fellow-member, ultimately injures himself.

Unity, then, is the indispensable condition of the Church's efficiency as an organ of the Divine purpose. If the lack of it spells impotence and futility to *any* society, much more is this the case in regard to the Church. For the Church exists in order to represent, and ultimately to achieve, the unity of mankind. But how can it do this if it fail to exhibit unity itself? Here is a question which is forcing itself more and more upon the minds and consciences of Christians in this generation. So long as the Church remains divided, so long will the Church's witness be impaired and its mission crippled. Nor must we put ourselves off with any soothing complacencies as to our being "one in spirit," even though outwardly divided. Dean Robinson well points out that when St. Paul speaks of "One Body and One Spirit" "no separation of body and spirit is contemplated. The notion that there could be several 'bodies' with a unity of 'spirit' is entirely alien to the thought of St. Paul."[27] If the Apostle's soul was filled with so passionate a horror by the "contentions" in the Church of Corinth, what would he have thought of the strife of definitely constituted and mutually competitive "denominations"? Not until the Church has itself learned the lessons of unity and brotherhood can it impart these lessons to others. For this, it must be repeated, is its *raison d'être.* The Church is intended to be the "ideal society"—the pattern of a common life lived according to the Divine will. It is only as the spirit of the ideal Church becomes the actual spirit, not of the Church only but of all mankind, that human life can become what God means it to be. A perfect social order is not (as so many social reformers seem mistakenly to imagine) a matter of mere organization—as though a skilful arrangement of the component parts could compensate for the inherent faultiness of the parts themselves. It must rest on a moral foundation: it implies a radical change of heart. "The Kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). It may be *natural* for the strong to trample on the weak: but the very idea of basing human relations on the "struggle for existence" would be intolerable to St. Paul. Even now, when discord reigns supreme, the Christian must see that he at least is free from the blame of it. He cannot force others to be at peace with him: but (at least in intention) he must be at peace with others. "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. xii. 18). Rather than infringe this peace, he must be ready to endure personal wrong, leaving the ultimate vindication of his case to a righteous God. "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me: I will recompense, saith the Lord" (xii. 19). So, too, by dutiful obedience to the temporal "powers that be" (xiii. 1), he must help those powers to discharge their essential business of maintaining order and tranquillity among men. In this sense, even under a Nero, "the social organism is a power on the side of good."[28] If it would be too much to describe the Apostle as a believer in "peace at any price," yet at least he is willing to make large sacrifices for the sake of peace. It is noticeable that of the sixteen "works of the flesh" mentioned in Galatians (v. 19 *f.*), no less than eight are violations of unity of some sort. A properly ordered society rests not on competition but on co-operation. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). The strength of the strong must be used not to exploit, but to help, the weak. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. xv. 1). The brutal selfishness with which a man uses his fellows for his own purposes and then casts them on the scrap-heap, the greed which concentrates in the hands of a few what was meant for the use and enjoyment of all—such things are utterly incompatible with a healthy and happy common life. Neither "covetous men" nor "extortioners" can "enter into the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10): because if they did, it would speedily cease to be such. For St. Paul no less than for Jesus love is the principle of all right action—the "bond of perfectness" (Col. iii. 14). Now "love worketh no ill to his neighbour" (Rom. xiii. 10). Love is the duty of all to all. "Owe no man anything save to love one another : for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law" (xiii. 8). And just as the Apostle condemns the characteristic vice of the strong and energetic—a ruthless self-assertion—so he condemns equally the characteristic vice of the idle and inefficient—that base parasitism which is content to live on the resources of the community, instead of exerting itself to increase them for the good of all. No one believes more than he does in hard work. He had always worked hard himself: and he expects others to work hard too. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). By working a man will not only be able to keep himself, but also to help others. ". . . let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need" (Eph. iv. 28). The phrase "the thing that is good" may serve to remind us that it is not sufficient merely to work, but that our work must also be of a sort which is useful to the community. The activities of the company-promoter or the bookmaker are no doubt often exceedingly strenuous: but they are none the less anti-social for that. What a man has he must *earn:* he must not live by taking advantage of others. "Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. iv. 28). Truth and plain-dealing are explicitly marked out by St. Paul as duties arising out of the very nature of a corporate existence. "Putting away falsehood," he says, "speak ye truth every one with his neighbour, for we are members one of another" (*ibid.*, 25).

Such, then, are the principles of social well-being as enunciated by St. Paul. It may be urged that, however excellent in themselves, they are too vague and general to provide any definite basis for action. This is certainly true if by "definite basis" is meant a full-blown political programme. But neither the Church's Master nor the Church itself has ever claimed to dictate specific schemes of social reconstruction. Its concern is to provide principles, not measures. It proclaims the ideal: and leaves men to devise the machinery by which the ideal is to be translated into fact. This, however, by no means implies that when the Church has once proclaimed the ideal, it is free from all further responsibility in the matter. Not being composed of economic experts, it does not (or ought not to) regard it as its business to prescribe the means by which the world's evils are to be cured:

but it *is* its business to keep men's consciences alive to those evils and so to prevent their being continued through the mere *vis inertiæ* or the interest of a powerful section. Idealism is the very breath of its life : its mission is, by showing men what might be, to make them dissatisfied with what is—to produce a " divine discontent." If the public conscience is sufficiently aroused, it can usually be trusted to find its own way of grappling with an evil. It is obvious, however, that this function must be exercised with discretion and common-sense. All discontent is not " divine " by any means : and even when it is just in itself, it is little use stirring it up when there is not the slightest chance of its being satisfied. A good illustration of what is meant is supplied by St. Paul's attitude towards slavery. While preaching a doctrine of human fraternity and equality in the light of which slavery became an intolerable wrong and outrage, he yet never on any occasion attacks the institution as such. This attitude cannot have been prompted by either fear or inconsistency—the two last faults in the world that can be justly attributed to the Apostle. If he did not attack slavery, it was because he felt no duty to do so. In accounting for this silence, we must remember first of all that the slavery of St. Paul's time was a very different thing from the negro slavery familiar to us in the pages of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* The slave was a white man like his master ; he was often as well or better educated ; often, too, he stood high in his master's confidence. No doubt the inferior sort of slaves were often treated with great brutality : but, generally speaking, the influence of Stoicism was fast bringing about a far more humane treatment of the slave than heretofore. But further, the Church of the Apostolic age was obviously in no position to grapple with so gigantic a reconstruction of society as the abolition of slavery would have involved. What impression could these little scattered handfuls of humble folk hope to make upon an institution which was the basis of the whole social order of antiquity? Even if the Church had desired to see the emancipation of its Christian slave-members, there was no possibility of securing this from masters who in the vast bulk of cases were heathen. Actually, however, St. Paul seems to have been remarkably indifferent as to whether the Christian were a slave or free. The obscurity of his phrasing in 1 Corinthians vii. 21 makes it doubtful whether, in the case of emancipation being offered, he desired it to be accepted or refused. But in any case, the initiative in such a matter must come from the master, not from the slave. So far as the slave himself is concerned, his business is to acquiesce in his position, and to make it a part of his Christian duty to serve his master loyally and cheerfully. "Slaves, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as unto the Lord and not unto men" (Eph. vi. 5 *f.*; *cf.* Col. iii. 22 *f.*). In these words we are made aware of the intense "other-worldliness" of the

Apostolic Church. For men who felt themselves borne along on the tide of a tremendous spiritual experience, who were conscious of an almost incredible liberation of the soul's capacities and of an absolute equality of all souls before the eye of God, mere questions of temporal status had an entirely secondary importance. At best or at worst, this life was no more than a period of probation, an opportunity of preparing for a life to come in which the distinctions and inequalities of earth would be done away. To the "positive" spirit of our generation such an attitude is hardly comprehensible: but to the Christians of the first age it was the most natural thing in the world. Thus the "slave-question" (in so far as such a thing existed) lost its urgency. The Christian body had tasks nearer at hand to undertake. Yet none the less the institution was undermined. For Christians, at any rate, the inconsistency must have been hard to ignore between the legal view of the slave as a "chattel" and the religious view of the same slave as a "brother." If emancipation was never regarded as a duty, yet there is good reason to suppose that it was not infrequently conceded. The Christian spirit was clearly incompatible with slavery: and in good time (though admittedly less soon than might have been wished) that spirit triumphed. The obstacle throughout was the same obstacle that stands in the way of all our schemes of social betterment to-day—the unregenerate state of the natural human heart. And for that, if St. Paul had lived now, he could only suggest the remedies which he sought to apply to the evils of his own time—the untiring cultivation of the Christian temper of love, and, above all, a humble resort to the supernatural and re-creative grace of God vouchsafed to all mankind " in Christ."

[For a fuller treatment of the subject of this chapter, see especially Dr. W. E. Chadwick's *Social Teaching of St. Paul*.]

CHAPTER IV

THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

In passing from the Epistles of St. Paul to those of the other Apostolic writers of the New Testament, we are at once conscious of an enormous difference. From the Church historian's point of view the letters of St. Paul are of quite incomparable value. Not only do they reveal the personality and character of the writer in a manner which makes him (along with Socrates) perhaps the most vivid and life-like figure of antiquity, but they supply a picture no less real of the various Christian communities that owned the great Apostle as their founder and spiritual director. The personalities, on the other hand, which lie behind the non-Pauline Epistles appear shadowy and remote : and though it would be unfair to say that these afford us no help in reconstructing the life of the communities with which they deal, yet the traits are sporadic and usually vague, while the lack of local attachment deprives them of the greater part of their value. The difficulty is complicated by widely-felt doubts as to the authenticity (and consequently the date and destination) of these letters. The authenticity of the majority, at any rate, of St. Paul's letters is admitted by all sane critics. Very different is the case with regard to these others. The writer of Hebrews is unknown ; the authenticity of 1 and

2 Peter (particularly of the latter) is frequently questioned; the Johannine authorship of the so-called "Epistles of St. John" is at least exceedingly doubtful; and finally, the question of the authorship of James and Jude presents perhaps the hardest problem of all.

These difficulties are specially a handicap in dealing with such a subject as ours. The documents with which we are concerned in this chapter are by no means destitute of matter dealing with the social precept and practice of the Church: but it is hard to estimate aright the bearing of their evidence when we are so much in the dark as to questions of date and place. In no case are these difficulties more acute than in regard to the Epistle of St. James. The James whose name stands at the head of the letter is commonly identified with "James the Lord's brother," who was the leading figure in the Church of Jerusalem and was martyred *circa* 62 A.D. On this supposition the Epistle must have been written before that date. The truth of this ascription, however, has been very extensively denied even by moderate critics. The most widely divergent dates have been suggested. Spitta regards the Epistle as a working-up of a pre-Christian Jewish document on the ground that there is nothing specifically Christian in its contents. Von Soden dates it about 96: while Pfleiderer accepts the startling hypothesis that it was produced in Rome in the second half of the second century. This view is based on the resemblances between our Epistle and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, of which it is alleged to be "the hortatory and polemical version."[29] That such resemblances exist is undeniable—though few will probably be prepared to draw Pfleiderer's conclusion from it. Nothing is more characteristic of Hermas (as we shall see later) than his distrust of riches and prejudice against the wealthy: and exactly the same attitude is found in James. This trait is often used as an argument in favour of James being the author on the ground that it reflects that Ebionite tendency which seems to have always characterized the Jerusalem community, and was to become more and more prominent in the Judaistic Christianity of Palestine as time went on. That it was written by a Jewish Christian to Jewish Christians seems highly probable. On the other hand, it is not easy to see how so unscrupulous an acquisitiveness and so unwholesome an adulation of wealth as it portrays could have been developed so early in the history of the Church as the lifetime of James. A situation of this sort certainly suggests a period when the first glow of enthusiasm was dying down, and worldly considerations were beginning to gain the upper hand.

This doubtfulness of date is the more regrettable in that the picture is so vividly drawn. We see the rich man walking into the synagogue clad in fine apparel and with his gold ring conspicuous on his finger, while the Church officials crowd round to lavish attentions on him and find him a prominent place (ii. 2, 3). Is he a Christian or is he only an interested outsider who is regarded as a possible convert and highly desirable acquisition? It is not easy to say. Meanwhile the poor man is thrust into a corner or under the feet of the more prosperous sort. Such " respect of persons " moves the indignation of the writer. In the sight of God the only standard that matters is a spiritual standard. Judged by this the poor are rich, the rich are poor. This seems to be assumed throughout the Epistle. It is not merely that a man's material status is represented as indifferent : but there seems to be a definite assumption that to be rich is to be morally and spiritually inferior. " Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seat ? Do not they blaspheme the honourable name by which ye are called ?" (ii. 6 *f.*). And again : " Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you " (v. 1). The " poor as to the world," on the other hand, are " rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom " (ii. 5). It is surely unnecessary, however, to see in this more than a certain rhetorical exaggeration consequent upon the writer's intense conviction of the spiritual peril with which the possession (and still more the pursuit) of riches is fraught—a conviction which, we have seen, is no less characteristic of the teaching of the Lord Himself. It is the acquisitiveness of the natural man that lies at the root of most of the world's evil. " Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you ? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members ? Ye lust and have not : ye kill and covet and cannot obtain " (iv. 1 *f.*). Men who view life in this way are incapable of realizing the essential transiency of earthly things. " Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city and spend a year there and trade and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (iv. 13-14). The love of gain is a slippery incline which leads by fatally easy stages to dishonesty and oppression. "Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out" (v. 4). The true Christian, on the other hand, is he who keeps the "royal law" (ii. 8) of love. Faith is nothing without works. "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction . . ." (i. 27). The kind of piety which would use the Fatherhood of God as an excuse for ignoring the brotherhood of men is keenly satirized. "If a brother or sister be naked or in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what does it profit?" (ii. 15-16).

Before we leave this Epistle, we must at least notice Dr. Moulton's ingenious theory[30] as to its origin and purpose. According to him, it was written by "James the Lord's brother," but addressed not to Christians but to *Jews*. If this theory be correct, the tyranny of and obsequiousness towards wealth which the Epistle denounces are Jewish defects, and not Christian at all: and the early Church is thus relieved of an unpleasant stigma. Indeed, the Epistle becomes the protest of the unworldly Christian consciousness against the materialism and false standards of contemporary Jewish society. It must be confessed that there is much force in Dr. Moulton's plea that not for a number of generations were the circumstances of the Church's life such as to render the picture drawn by St. James at all natural or probable. On the other hand, this picture accords only too well with what we know of the Judaism of the first century, A.D.—a Judaism dominated by the spirit of Annas and Caiaphas. But however attractive Dr. Moulton's theory may be, it cannot be regarded as proved.

Unlike the Epistle just dealt with, the two Epistles of St. Peter contain so little that is relevant to our subject that the question of their date and authenticity is, from our point of view, of small importance. The second Epistle contains nothing at all beyond a casual allusion to "love of the brethren" (i. 7). The first contains one brief passage that calls for passing notice: but the traits which it suggests would be equally applicable to any period of the Church's early history. The writer urges his readers to "be fervent in love" among themselves, adding the beautiful phrase, "For love covereth the multitude of sins" (iv. 8). There is also the familiar exhortation to "hospitality" (iv. 9). The same exhortation occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (xiii. 2). The writer also adds in the next verse: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them: them that are evil entreated, as being yourselves also in the body." The scope and purpose of the Epistle, however, are not as to call forth any detailed treatment of our subject. The same remark applies also to the Epistle of Jude.

There remain the three Epistles of St. John. The question of their authorship, as of that of the Fourth Gospel, remains, and probably will ever remain, an unsolved problem. It is now fairly generally admitted, however, that the Johannine writings represent the doctrinal and ethical teaching current in the Christian Churches of Western Asia Minor in the first part of the second century A.D. While they unquestionably contain a very transcendental conception of our Lord's Person, it is a mistake to suppose that they were produced primarily in the interests of theological speculation. The truth is rather the opposite.[31] As against the exaggerated intellectualism of the Gnostics, which (there is good reason to believe) was often allied with a certain cold aloofness and indifference to the claims of the common life,[32] the writer seeks to recall his hearers to the practical and primitive conception of Christianity as the religion of love. For him, as for our Lord Himself, the Christian life is the expression of two great principles—love of God and love of men. So inextricably are these two intertwined that the writer passes from one to the other and then back again with a rapidity that is almost bewildering. Indeed, the two are in a sense one. A genuine love of God is bound to issue in the love of man : for love is the very essence of the Divine nature. Thus the love of others is the test by which the reality of our love towards God is proved. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God : for God is love" (iv. 8). And again : "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (iv. 20). Bishop Westcott comments thus on this passage: "The title 'brother' brings out the idea of that which is God-like in men, to which love can be directed. He therefore who fails to recognize God as He reveals Himself through Christ in men, cannot love God. He has refused the help which God has provided for the expression of love in action."[33] Indeed, the writer of the Epistle goes so far as to say that "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (iii. 15). And as the test of a true love of God is the love of man, so the test of a true love of man is the readiness for sacrifice. The love of the Christian for his brother finds its pattern and inspiration in the love of the Crucified. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (iii. 16). And if our lives, much more our property. "Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (iii. 17). It is true that in the Johannine sense (to quote Bishop Westcott again) a man's "brother is his fellow-Christian, and not, more generally, his fellow-man," and also, that "the idea of brotherhood under the new dispensation is normally thus limited."[33] But the narrower is the necessary means towards realizing the wider relation: and if the latter appears to be ignored, it is only because the author's concern is with the relations of Christians among themselves, and not with human relations generally.

PART II

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY FATHERS

THE student of early Christian literature (if, that is to say, he accepts the traditional dating of the New Testament books as written before 100 A.D.) cannot but be struck by the extraordinary intellectual inferiority of the Church writers of the second century as compared with those of the first. When, however, he turns from the intellectual to the moral sphere, he is conscious rather of advance than of retrogression.[34] It is not difficult to see why this should be so. The Gentile converts of the Apostles were brands plucked from the burning: and the smell of scorch was still on them. A Corinthian, for example, who had been born and bred in the heart of the worst corruption of the ancient world, could not be expected, on becoming a Christian, to cease altogether to feel the lure of his old sins. In particular, the characteristic Greek vices of sensuality and factiousness were still a very real danger. It would, of course, be absurd to suppose that with the passing of the first generation of Christians such dangers actually ceased to exist. But a definite moral standard was fast forming: in Ignatius we find the phrase κατὰ χριστιανισμὸν ζῆν (*Magn.*, 10. 1). The presence, too, of old and seasoned Christians must have been a great moral support and check to the rising generation within the Church. The advantageous position enjoyed by those who had been brought up from birth in a Christian atmosphere, over those who till manhood had known nothing but pagan corruption, needs no emphasis. Of course, the old Adam was still likely to break out on occasion : no period of the Church's history has been altogether free from scandals. Yet here, again, the existence of a definite Christian standard to which appeal could be made must have been of the greatest value in helping to bring the sinner to repentance.

A proof of the existence and value of such a standard—a standard, too, not merely abstract but concrete—is afforded even before the end of the first century in the *Epistle* which Clement, speaking in the name of the Roman church, addressed to the church of Corinth, *circa* A.D. 96. The latter church was once more a prey to faction : and the Roman church (which from the beginning seems to have felt a certain responsibility for the welfare of other churches) hastened to intervene in the interests of peace. It is not absolutely certain where the cause of the strife lay : but we shall, perhaps, not be far wrong if we see in it the result of the process by which, in Corinth, as elsewhere, the old charismatic ministry was giving way to a ministry of office. In any case, the real root of the trouble —a quarrelsome, self-assertive spirit—was the same as in St. Paul's time. But now, in dealing with the evil, Clement is able to appeal (as the founder of the church in question could not) to a " golden age " which had existed before the trouble began.

We may suspect that the beautiful picture of the church in Corinth previously to the disturbance of its peace is a trifle idealized by the writer with the object of pointing his moral more clearly : yet it cannot be mere invention. A prominent feature of that picture is the spirit of love which reigned in the Corinthian church. Clement speaks of the "splendour of" its "hospitality" (1. 2). It was "more ready to give than to receive" (2. 1). There was an "insatiable desire for well-doing" (2. 2). They "were kind to one another without grudging, being ready to every good work" (2. 7). But now "the spirit of Cain" (4. 1) had entered into them. This seems to have expressed itself in greed rather for place and power than for money : yet any diminution of the church's solidarity of feeling would necessarily impair the mutual helpfulness of its members. Clement therefore exhorts them to cast off, among other forms of selfishness and self-assertion, "covetousness" and "want of hospitality" (35. 5). "Let not the strong man," he says, "despise the weak : and let the weak shew respect to the strong. Let the rich man distribute to the necessity of the poor : and let the poor give thanks to God that He hath given unto him one by whom his want may be supplied" (38. 2). The praises of love are sung in words that are like an echo of St. Paul's great hymn in 1 Corinthians xiii. (49. 5).

The note which is thus struck in the earliest of Christian writings outside the New Testament is sounded continually by the writers who succeed. In the summing-up of Christian duties—beginning and ending, "This is the Way of Light"—which we find in the nineteenth chapter of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, love of one's neighbour plays an important part. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour above thine own soul." "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods: thou shalt not be grasping." "Thou shalt share all things with thy neighbour, neither shalt thou call anything thine own. For if ye are partakers in that which is imperishable, how much more in things that are perishable?" "Be not found stretching out thine hands to receive, and drawing them in to give." "Thou shalt not hesitate to give nor giving shalt thou grumble." The letters of Ignatius are so taken up with questions of doctrine, and even more of Church order as the guarantee of doctrine, that his allusions to the duties of practical Christianity are only incidental. However, brotherly love is so vital a condition of ecclesiastical unity that it is naturally insisted on. For instance, we read, "Do ye all have respect for one another and let none regard his neighbour according to the flesh, but in Jesus Christ love one another always. Let there be nothing in you which can divide you" (*Magn.*, 6. 2). Writing to Polycarp, he bids him see that "the widows are not neglected" (*Polyc.*, 4. 1). Polycarp himself, in his Epistle to the church of Philippi, lays stress on the claims to assistance of widows, the sick and the poor (6. 1). The duty of almsgiving is no less emphatically inculcated by Hermas. It is, of course, peculiarly incumbent on the rich: but even the less well-to-do must be prepared to give of their hard-won earnings. "Out of thy labours which God gives to thee, give with simplicity to all who are in need: not hesitating as to whom to give and to whom not to give. Give to all, for God desires that there should be given to all of His own gifts" (*Mand.*, 2. 4). In the *Didache* the duty of giving is described in the most absolute terms: "Give to everyone who asketh thee, and ask not again: for the Father wills that there should be given to all of His gifts. Blessed is he who giveth according to the commandment" (1. 5). On the other hand, a word of warning which occurs a little later in the same work suggests the commonsense qualification that was no doubt frequently, if not universally, applied to the absolute command to give: "Let thy alms stick to thy hand until thou knowest to whom to give" (1. 6). The undeserving recipient of charity is also warned that he will not escape punishment. "Woe to him that receiveth, for if he receiveth anything having need he is guiltless: but if he hath not need he shall account as to why and for what purpose he hath received it: and being in durance he shall be examined concerning what he hath done, and he shall not go forth until he hath paid the uttermost farthing" (1. 5). The words of Barnabas are repeated in so identical a form that we may doubtless postulate a common source. "Thou shalt share all things with thy brother: neither shalt thou call anything thine own" (4. 8). Justin Martyr and Tertullian express themselves to the same effect. Justin Martyr, contrasting the manner of living of his co-religionists as Christians with what it had been in their heathen state, writes: "Formerly we desired money and possessions beyond anything : but now we contribute what we have to the common fund and share it with everyone who has need" (1 *Apol.*, 14. 2). Similarly, Tertullian in his *Apologeticus* (39) says : "We therefore who are united in mind and soul, doubt not about having our possessions in common. With us all things are shared promiscuously except our wives." Even more striking, as the admission of a contemptuous opponent, is the testimony of Lucian : "They [*i.e.* the Christians] despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property."[35]

Such expressions must, of course, not be taken too literally. Communism, properly so-called, never existed in the Church—not even (as we have seen) in the Church of the first days at Jerusalem. Certain Gnostic sects (notably the Carpocratians) practised both community of goods and community of wives. It is to the latter that Tertullian makes allusion in the passage just quoted. But the Great Church never condemned nor forbade the possession of property as such. On the other hand, the "world-renouncing" spirit of early Christianity caused it to look decidedly askance at wealth and its accumulation. The spiritual danger attending riches is ceaselessly insisted on—notably by Polycarp, who utters repeated warnings against the "love of money." His emphasis was seemingly prompted by the case of a presbyter called Valens, who appears to have been guilty of misappropriating Church funds (*ad Phil.*, 11. 1). "The love of money," says Polycarp, "is the beginning of all troubles" (*ibid.*, 4. 1). But it is in Hermas that distrust of riches assumes its most pronounced form. Hermas himself was a small tradesman of the middle class, to which the great majority of the Christian community in Rome probably belonged. But neither the rich nor the poor were absent. Hermas' prejudice against the former is very marked, though he cannot deny that they included blameless Christians among them. Probably he regarded the wealthier sort of Christians as the Church's "soft spot" in the time of persecution, the thought of which was always uppermost in his mind. He speaks of "those who are involved in business and riches and heathen friendships and many other affairs of this world: such as are intent on these things do not understand the parables of the Godhead: for they are darkened by these doings and are corrupted and become sterile" (*Mand.*, 10. 1). So in the interpretation of the ninth Similitude he warns his readers that "they who are entangled in much business and in diversity of affairs do not cleave to the servants of God, but are choked by their affairs and go astray: and they who are rich with difficulty cleave to the servants of God: fearing lest they should be asked for anything by them. These therefore shall hardly enter the Kingdom of God" (*Sim.*, 9. 20). In the third Vision (that of the Tower) he utters a similar warning: "Beware therefore, ye that glory in your riches, that they groan not who are in want and their sighing come up unto the Lord, and ye be shut out with your goods without the gate of the tower" (*Vis.*, 3. 9. 6). In his own case, wealth had been nothing but a burden and a snare. "When thou wast rich," says the Lady

Ecclesia to him, " thou wast unprofitable, but now thou art profitable and helpful for the Life " (*ibid.*, 3. 6. 7). Even he, however, does not desire the abolition, but only the limitation, of property. In the ninth Similitude he thus interprets the " round and bright stones " which compose the " white mountain." " Hear why they are found round. Their riches have a little hidden them from the truth and darkened them : howbeit they have never departed from God. . . . When, therefore, the Lord saw their mind and that they might favour the truth and continue good, He commanded their riches to be cut down (for He would not have them taken wholly away), to the end that they may do some good with that which was left " (*Sim.*, 9. 30). Rightly regarded, wealth is nothing but an opportunity for service. " Instead of fields buy souls that are in trouble, as everyone is able. . . . For this end the Lord has enriched you that ye might fulfil these ministries for Him . . ." (*ibid.*, 1. 8 *f.*). Between rich and poor there should be a mutuality of service : the rich providing for the poor and the poor praying for the rich. This is illustrated in the second Similitude—that of the vine and the elm—which is thus interpreted : " The rich man hath much wealth : but as touching the Lord he is poor, being taken up about his riches : and he prays but little to the Lord, and the prayers which he makes are poor and without force above. But when the rich man rests upon the poor and gives him what he needs, he believes that what he does to the poor man can find its reward with God, because the poor is rich in prayer . . . and his prayer has great power with God. The rich man therefore helps the poor in all things without doubting. But the poor man being helped by the rich, makes intercession to God . . . for him who gives to him" (*Sim.*, 2. 5 *f.*).

The attitude of Christianity towards wealth is the subject of Clement of Alexandria's homily, *Quis dives salvetur.* Clement is fully alive to the danger of riches, "a superabundance of which is of itself sufficient to fill with conceit the minds of its possessors and to corrupt them and lead them away from the path of salvation" (1). He condemns severely those who by flattering the wealthy "join to wealth, which is by nature heavy to bear, a yet heavier burden, pride: whereas they ought rather to treat wealth as a dangerous and deadly disease by diminishing it and cutting it back" (*ibid.*). On the other hand, he is concerned to show, first, that "the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven is not altogether denied to" the wealthy (3): and secondly, "by what sort of deeds and dispositions they may obtain the enjoyment of their hope" (*ibid.*). The argument takes the form of a discussion of the passage describing the interview between our Lord and the rich young man in St. Mark x. 17 *f.* Our Lord's command, "Sell that thou hast," is thus interpreted: "It does not bid him, as some take it, in an off-hand manner, to cast away the property he has and give up his wealth: but it bids him banish from his soul his opinions concerning wealth, the feeling for it, the excessive desire, the passionate and diseased excitement concerning it, the cares, the thorns of earthly life, which choke the seed of true life" (11.). He scouts as absurd the idea that mere poverty in itself can be a passport to the Divine favour. Nor is there virtue in the mere giving up of wealth as such (12). "Far more profitable" is it "that a man should have sufficient and himself be in no distress concerning his property and also help those he ought to. For what charitable fellowship would be left among men if no one possessed anything?" (13). In this connection he quotes St. Luke xvi. 9 and St. Matthew vi. 20: and points to our Lord's acceptance of the hospitality of such rich men as Zacchæus and Levi. "We must not then cast away the wealth that benefits our neighbour also. . . . Now this wealth is at our disposal, and is supplied to us as a sort of material and as an instrument to be well used by those who know how to do so" (14). Wealth in itself is neither good nor evil: it is the *use* to which it is put that is good or bad. "Are you able to use it righteously? then it is your servant for righteousness. Does a man use it unrighteously? Then it is found to be a servant of unrighteousness. . . . Let no one therefore destroy his possessions but rather the passions of his soul, which prevent his making a better use of his property" (*ibid.*). Here, as elsewhere, it is "the condition and disposition of the soul" that matters (15). "Canst thou get the upper hand of thy wealth? Say so, and Christ does not draw thee away from thy property. . . . But dost thou see that thou art worsted and overthrown by wealth? Leave it, cast it away, hate it" (24). The right use of wealth, according to Clement, lies in almsgiving. (This may seem to us an unnecessarily narrow view:

but we can hardly quarrel with our author for failing to anticipate modern scientific theories of wealth.) Commenting on St. Luke vi. 32 (" Give to everyone that asketh thee "), he says: " Such fondness of giving is indeed of God: but this saying is beyond all divinity (?), not even to wait to be asked, but oneself to seek out who is worthy to be benefited " (32). True charity, moreover, is expressed, not by occasional spasmodic acts of generosity, but by sustained and deliberate effort. " 'Make a friend,' says Christ (St. Luke xvi. 9): now a friend is not formed by one gift, but by continual alleviation and long intercourse " (*ibid.*). In regard to the danger of giving to the undeserving, Clement expresses himself thus: " In the uncertainty of ignorance it is better to benefit even the unworthy for the sake of the worthy than in guarding against the less good not to fall in with the excellent " (33).

The Christian attitude towards material possessions is further dealt with by Clement in his work called *Pædagogus*. He passes severe condemnation on all kinds of luxurious expenditure—dress, precious stones, costly furniture, sumptuous banquets. " God has made all things for all men. . . . A man must not say, ' These things belong to me: why should I not use them for my pleasure?' but rather, ' These things are mine, why should I not share them with the needy?' " " I know," he adds, " that God has given us the power of using the world's good things: but only to the limit of what is necessary " (ii. 13). All " superfluities " therefore must be abandoned, and only what is necessary retained. Whereas others " live to eat," the Christian must merely " eat to live " (ii. 1). There is no disgrace in poverty—except it be the poverty of the miser (iii. 4). The inexhaustible bountifulness of true charity is illustrated in a fine figure. " Even as springing wells, when they are drawn upon, rise to their former level, so the bestowal of gifts that spring of love towards men shares its drink with the thirsty and is again increased and replenished " (*ibid.*, 7).

As the third century advances, the emphasis laid by Church writers on the duty of almsgiving becomes more rather than less marked. The increasing distress of the ancient world, now growing decrepit, made ever sterner demands upon the charity of Christians. We shall see how nobly these demands were met. At the same time, we cannot help noticing the beginnings of a certain unhealthiness in the manner in which the duty is presented. The " first love " of the Primitive Church was dying down; the motive of pure charity had lost something of its force; and new stimuli had to be applied to enable the average Christian to struggle to the height of his obligations. Especially do we observe a greatly increased insistence on the *rewards* of almsgiving. It would be untrue to say that this motive is never appealed to by the writers of the second century. But it is not unduly emphasized: and never transcends the limits observed by the writers of the New Testament. In the main, the alms of Christians are represented and regarded as a *thank-offering*—in the spirit of St. Paul's phrase, " Freely ye have received, freely give." When, however, we come to such a writer as Cyprian, we are conscious of a change. There is a certain lowering of the moral atmosphere—a lowering for which not the writer but his hearers are primarily responsible. The higher motives are by no means ignored: but the appeal to the self-interest of the giver is becoming unpleasantly prominent. Especially dangerous is the stress laid upon almsgiving as a means to forgiveness of sins. This, again, is not unknown in the writers of the second century. For example, in the so-called Second Epistle of Clement (which is not an Epistle at all, but the oldest Christian homily), we read: "Beautiful is almsgiving, even as repentance for sin. Better is fasting than prayer, but almsgiving is better than both. . . . Blessed is everyone that in these things is found full, for almsgiving is a lightening of the burden of sin" (16. 4). We remember, too, Hermas' teaching as to the spiritual blessings which the poor man's prayers win for the rich man in return for his charity. It is, however, in Origen and, especially, in Cyprian that the principle is first definitely worked out into a system and made, as Uhlhorn says, "part of the scheme of salvation." It is particularly noticeable in Cyprian's little treatise *De opere et eleemosynis*. Indeed, the writer is so anxious to use the argument which it puts in his grasp that he enunciates it at the very outset. Quoting Ecclesiasticus iii. 33, "As water extinguishes fire, so do alms extinguish sin," he goes on: "Here also it is shown and proved that as by the laver of saving water the fire of hell is extinguished, so also by alms and good deeds the flame of sin is assuaged. And even as remission of sins is given once in baptism, so assiduous and continual good works bestow forgiveness a second time" (*op. cit.*, 2). Of this passage Archbishop Benson well says: "There can be no better illustration than this teaching (in which a distinct propitiatory value is assigned to our own action) of the combined results, in the development of doctrine, of resorting to the Jewish Apocrypha, relying on a Version, and constructing a theory from a word."[36] The same idea is emphasized and developed in the three following chapters. It would, however, be exceedingly unfair to Cyprian to represent him as a sort of Tetzel, a mere vendor of Divine grace. He clearly implies that it is not the giving of money by itself, but the love that prompts the giving which helps to save a man's soul. Moreover, like all the other Christian writers, he is intensely alive to the spiritual perils of wealth. Addressing the selfish rich man, he says: "Thou art the captive and slave of thy wealth, thou art bound with the chains and fetters of cupidity, and thou whom Christ had freed art put in bonds afresh. *Servas pecuniam quæ te servata non servat*" (*op. cit.*, 13). He speaks with a fine scorn of those wealthy Christians (it seems that there were already such) who attended the Church's worship without making an offering for the Church's needs. "Thou art wealthy and rich," he says, "and thou canst believe that thou keepest the Lord's Supper, thou who never lookest at the *corbona* [the church chest], who comest to the Lord's house without a sacrifice, who takest thy part of the sacrifice which the poor man has offered"(15)—alluding to the Eucharistic oblations of bread and wine. There is a striking passage, too, in which he represents Satan as scornfully contrasting the lavishness of *his* "*munerarii*"—the ambitious purveyors of heathen shows and games—with the parsimony of the *munerarii* of Christ. Here again, however, the insistence on reward—God and Christ being compared to the judges of a spectacle who adjudicate on the merits of the rival displays (*munera*) and award the prize accordingly (21, 22)—strikes us somewhat unpleasantly.

A further change which makes its appearance in the course of the third century is the recognition now given to a "double standard" of Christian morality. Formerly, the same obligations had been regarded as binding upon all Christians alike. All alike, too, were content to work out their salvation in the world, even though they were not *of* the world. But as the second century drew to its close and the membership of the Christian Churches became more widely extended, a distinct cooling of the first enthusiasm manifested itself. Carelessness and worldliness crept in, so that it became impossible to describe all members of the Church as "live" members. Inevitably, too, the number of those who apostatized under stress of persecution increased. It was this situation which gave rise to the movement known as Montanism. The aim of Montanus and his followers may be described as a sort of "Primitive Methodism"—an attempt to meet the growing secularization by a return to the methods and standards of the first age of Christianity. Great stress was laid on ecstasy and prophecy: and with this went a raising of the ethical demand

and a rigorous tightening of ecclesiastical discipline, especially against those who had lapsed under persecution. The Christian who had denied his Lord was shut out of the Church for life: there could be no "second repentance." It was the dream that again and again has haunted the minds of the stricter sort of Christians—the dream of a Church on earth holy and without spot, from which all sinners should be excluded. The Great Church, however, declined to adopt the Montanist solution, which could have had no other result than to reduce the Christian community to an insignificant handful of pious rigorists, utterly without influence on the main stream of human life. But if it refused to admit the Montanist dichotomy of "spiritual" and "psychical" men, it was only to substitute a dichotomy of its own—that of "perfect" and "imperfect" Christians. The average level of Christian morality, depressed by the shortcomings of the worldly and the cowardly, was to be restored by the transcendent virtues of the heroic few. If some did less than their duty, others must do more in order to redress the balance. The result of this attitude is seen in the insistence upon voluntary poverty which was to issue in Christian monasticism. The ordinary Christian may remain in the world and take part in its business, may buy and sell, marry and beget children. The "perfect" Christian, however, will forsake both family ties and property in the interest of a higher spiritual development. The extent of the change involved may be gauged when we compare the exposition of the incident of the rich young man in *Quis dives salvetur* with Origen's explanation of the same incident in his *Homilies on St. Matthew* (xv. 15). For Christ, wealth is something to be *used*: for Origen, it is merely something to be *abandoned*—if, at least, the owner would be "perfect." The same view is taken by Cyprian in his *De lapsis* (ii. 35). The time, indeed, was not yet come for the later monastic communism: the Christian ascetic was still an isolated unit. But the principle of the monastic ideal was fairly on its way.

In regard to slavery, the Church, during the period which we are considering, adhered to the attitude taken up by the writers of the New Testament. That is to say, the spiritual equality of the slave was insisted on and masters were urged to treat their slaves with kindness and consideration: but no attempt was made to abolish slavery as an institution even within the circle of the Christian community itself. In the face of the profound distrust and dislike with which the Imperial authorities and popular opinion alike regarded the new religion—a distrust and dislike which its adherents showed an even painful anxiety to disarm—the Church may well have shrunk from a step which could so easily be construed as revolutionary. It is true that the principles of fraternity and spiritual equality inherent in Christianity made the abolition of slavery inevitable sooner or later. Even more destructive of the foundation on which ancient slavery rested, was the Christian insistence on the duty and dignity of labour. The Greek world had always held the *βάναυσος* in contempt. The Christian writers, on the other hand, reflect faithfully St.

Paul's view that even manual labour is something honourable.[37] Thus slavery lost at the same time both its philosophical and its economic justification. It was left, however, to later generations to draw and apply the practical conclusion. For the present the slave—even the Christian slave of a Christian master—must remain a slave. His Christian profession gives him no claim to emancipation—only a duty to be more diligent and obedient in his service. Ignatius, in writing to Polycarp, is at pains to make this quite clear. He bids Polycarp see that "he does not despise slaves, male or female." "Yet," he goes on, "let them not be puffed up either: but let them rather continue as slaves to the glory of God that they may obtain a better freedom from God. Let them not desire to be ransomed out of the common funds, that they may not be found to be slaves of desire" (*ad Polyc.*, 4. 3). This last sentence would indicate that a claim had been made by certain Christian slaves to receive their emancipation at the Church's expense. Ignatius refuses to admit this as a legitimate "charitable object." We are not, of course, to infer that a Christian master *never* gave his slaves their freedom: nor that the price of emancipation might not sometimes even be provided by the community where a slave's eternal interests were gravely jeopardized by his continuing as he was. But such cases were only exceptions: they were not to be regarded as creating a precedent. If there is something disappointing in this ready acquiescence in an institution which the modern conscience stigmatizes as abominable, it must be repeated that the "other-worldliness" of the primitive Christian point of view made all questions of merely outward and temporal status appear trifling. The spiritual order alone mattered: and within this order the distinction between slave and free, as between poor and rich or barbarian and Greek, simply did not exist. This attitude is well expressed by Tertullian. Addressing an emancipated slave, he says: "In the world all things are imaginary and nothing real: for even then, when thou wert redeemed by Christ thou wert free from men: and now although made free by men, thou art Christ's servant" (*De corona*, 13). However it may be in the world outside, within the Church all are equal. "The Christians call them [*i.e.* slaves] without distinction brethren," says Aristides (*Apol.*, 15). *Spiritu fratres*, *religione conservos*, says Lactantius (*Instit.*, v. 16). A servile origin was no bar to high office in the Church. Hermas' brother, the Roman ἐπίσκοπος Pius, must have been a slave; the later Roman bishop Callistus was an ex-slave too. The Council of Elvira in its eightieth canon prohibits any attempt to prevent the ordination of freed-men. The persecutions, too, confounded bond and free in an equality of heroism. In the noble army of martyrs no name is more illustrious than that of Blandina, the slave-girl of Lyons. Further, while admittedly acquiescing in slavery, the Church used every ounce of its influence to secure that slaves should be decently treated. Another canon of the Council just mentioned (the fifth) enacts that "If any woman under the influence of passion thrashes her maid so that within three days she dies," if the deed was done intentionally she shall be excommunicated for seven, if unintentionally, for five, years. Obviously this can only refer to a Christian mistress—a dreadful thought. But at least the Church did not regard such horrors with indifference.

On the question of war, as on that of slavery, the Church's political insignificance made any fundamental tackling of the moral problem hardly worth while. Practically, the point arose chiefly in connection with the question whether it was permissible for a Christian to serve as a soldier.[38] It would be too much to say that this was absolutely condemned. Not a few Christians *were* soldiers: and Tertullian (*Apol.* 42) even uses this fact to rebut the charge that Christianity made men bad citizens. But, apart from the abstract question, there was the fact to be reckoned with that the army was saturated with pagan associations and consecrated to the service of Divus Augustus. Tertullian seems to indicate his real mind elsewhere. *E.g.* in *De idol.* 19 he asserts that "there can be no real agreement between the Divine and the human *sacramentum*," and that "the Lord in disarming Peter has unbelted every soldier." Again (*De corona*, 11), he suggests that it were better for a soldier-convert to quit his calling (even at the risk of death) than face the moral anomalies involved in remaining. Yet even his rigorism seems to shrink from pressing the argument too far.

CHAPTER II

THE SCOPE AND METHODS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

I

THE unanimity and faithfulness with which the Church writers of the second and third centuries reiterate the " new commandment " of the Lord—" Love one another "—have been sufficiently indicated. The question has now to be considered: How far did the Church succeed in translating this commandment into practice? In attempting to answer this question, we must be on our guard against two dangers. There is, first, the danger of partiality—the tendency to choose out certain conspicuous illustrations of Christian charity and to treat them as representing the normal practice of average Christians. But equally there is the opposite danger of being over-exacting—of demanding more than, in the nature of things, could possibly be achieved. We must remember, in the first place, that even primitive Christians were only flesh and blood, and that the selfishness and acquisitiveness of the natural man can always be trusted to oppose a very stout resistance to the workings of Divine grace. We must remember, too, the limitations under which the Church of those early days worked. It is true that the aim and (so we believe) the ultimate goal of the Christian religion is nothing less than the refashioning of human society as a whole in accordance with the spirit of Christ. But such an aim cannot be achieved within a few generations: nor, even if it could, was the primitive Church in a position to attempt the task with any hope of success. For this it was deficient at once in status and in knowledge. In status, because it was a comparatively small body of quite insignificant people, who, in addition, were under the ban of the law. In knowledge, because modern scientific methods of social reconstruction were entirely beyond the ken of the ancient world. That world—the pagan part of it no less than the Christian—had its visions of a better ordering of human life: but they never got beyond the stage of visions. It is true that " Better a fence at the top than an ambulance at the bottom." But the situation of the Church allowed it little opportunity to attempt anything more than ambulance work: and it is by its success or failure in doing this that it must be judged. From this point of view the evidence at our disposal certainly seems to justify a favourable verdict. We are not compelled to confine ourselves to the vague, if glowing, periods of an *ex parte* rhetorician such as Tertullian, when in a famous passage he writes: " It is our care for the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. ' Only look,' they say, ' how they love one another ! (They themselves being given to mutual hatred.) Look how they are prepared to die for one another !' (They themselves being ready to kill each other)" (*Apol.*, 39). Our authorities provide us with numerous concrete illustrations of the charity of Christians—charity often raised to a really heroic level. More valuable still is the testimony of such a professed opponent of Christianity as the cynical Lucian (*v. infra*). We may note too the admission of the heathen Cæcilius, in Minucius Felix' dialogue *Octavius* (9. 3), that the Christians "recognize one another by hidden signs and tokens, and love each other almost before they know each other."

It will be convenient if we summarize under different heads the principal manifestations of the Church's charity.

(*a*) *Widows and orphans.*—These, as Harnack says, were "the poor *κατ' ἐξοχήν*."[39] The Christian community was composed, for the most part, of those who supported themselves by their daily work. Thus the death of the bread-winner at once deprived those left behind of their sole means of support. The care of these therefore devolved on the Church: and the liability was honoured to its fullest extent. The Christian prejudice against second marriage undoubtedly supplied a subsidiary motive. On the other hand, if the relatives were in a position to meet the obligation themselves, they were expected to fulfil it. It has frequently been represented that "widows" formed a definite ministerial order of women within the Church, charged with the performance of works of mercy. Professor C. H. Turner, however, after a careful examination of the evidence, concludes that this idea is a mistake. The essence of the institution of "widows" lies in their being supported by the

Church, not in their being church-workers. "The widows correspond not to our sisters of charity, but to the occupants of our almshouses."[40] Their service was a service of prayer, not of active work. This at least seems to have been the case until the third century—the period of the earliest *Church Orders*.[41] These exhibit a new and increasing tendency to use the "widows" as helpers in the active work of the Church. Such duties were, however, strictly limited and secondary. Their chief work was still a work of prayer. Regarded in some sense as a dedicated body, the Church's widows enjoyed what was distinctly an "honourable estate." Polycarp, in his *Epistle* (4. 3), bids them remember that they are "God's altar": and the *Didascalia* repeats the expression, basing on it a warning against "gadding about." "Now the altar of God does not wander hither and thither, but is fixed in one place" (iii. 6). Tertullian (*De pudicitia*, 13) represents them as occupying a special place in the Church assemblies. Hermas lays stress on the duty of assisting widows and orphans (*Mand.*, 8. 10), and Aristides, in his *Apology*, testifies to its fulfilment. "From the widows they [the Christians] do not turn away their countenance: and they rescue the orphan from him who does him violence" (15). The *Didascalia* discusses the privileges and duties of widows at considerable length. From the same authority we learn that the Church undertook the responsibility of finding homes for Christian orphans and for starting them in life. The girls were to be found husbands: the boys taught a trade (iv. 2). The duty of adopting orphans would obviously be specially binding in the case of those children whose parents had fallen victims to persecution. Origen is the most famous example of a child brought up in this way and for this reason.[42] In striking contrast to such generosity, Clement of Alexandria depicts in scathing terms the selfishness of those rich pagan ladies who " bring up parrots and curlews, but will not take in the orphan child " (*Pæd.* iii. 4).

(*b*) *The sick and poor.*—From the beginning the Christian religion claimed to be a " religion of healing." Harnack has shown how important a part this characteristic played in helping on its extension. Such healing was of men's bodies as well as of their souls. In addition to the curing of the sick, the Church also undertook their care and support. The visitation and relief of the sick formed an important part of the duties of deacons and deaconesses (*v. infra*). Widows also assisted in this work—at least, in the later part of our period.[43] The efforts of the Church's official representatives were seconded by those of private individuals. Tertullian speaks of the difficulty which the Christian wife of a heathen husband would experience in getting leave " to go from street to street the round of strange and, indeed, all the poorer cottages, for the sake of visiting the brethren " (*Ad. uxor.*, ii. 4). The same writer, in his *Apologeticus*, praises the zeal of the Christians in relieving " house-ridden old men " (39). Besides the sick, the poor (those, at least, who were deserving and unable to support themselves) were also the object of the Church's charity. We may note here the part played by the Agapæ in their later form in providing free meals for the needier members of the Christian community. The Roman church was especially notable for its generosity to the poor. We learn from a letter of Bishop Cornelius quoted by Eusebius (*H.E.*, vi. 43), that in A.D. 250 it supported, besides 100 clergy, no less than 1,500 poor persons. This has been variously estimated as representing an annual expenditure of from £4,000 to £11,000 a year. We are reminded also of the ancient legend of the deacon Laurence, who, when bidden to produce under pain of death the treasures of the Roman church, indicated the poor whose wants it relieved as the only treasure it possessed.[44] From the beginning it seems to have been understood that the poor had an indefeasible claim to a portion of all Church funds. Besides sharing in the Church's money, the sick and the poor had also their part in the Church's prayers. In the solemn prayer which forms the climax of the *First Epistle* of Clement, the writer supplicates the Creator of all things—" Him who maketh poor and maketh rich "—to " feed the hungry, ransom our prisoners, raise up the sick "(59). In this prayer we may doubtless see a specimen of the liturgical supplications used in the Church assemblies of the time: from which we conclude that prayer for the poor and suffering formed a regular part of Christian worship from the earliest period.

(*c*) *The provision of work.*—It is obvious that a charity so large-hearted and disinterested as that which we are describing was liable to abuse. Our authorities make it clear that even within the

Church there were those who would rather live on the alms of others than work for themselves: and—at least in the time when persecution was quiescent—it may well have been worth while for shady characters such as Lucian's Peregrinus Proteus to attach themselves to the Christian body for the sake of what they could get out of it. The idea, too, which St. Paul had to combat among his Thessalonian converts that a holy idleness was more acceptable to God than a share in the labour of the work-a-day world, had by no means died out. It is therefore a signal proof of the sound common-sense which the Church contrived to mingle with its lofty idealism that careful precautions were taken against the mere parasite. Nothing could be sounder than the principle laid down in the pseudo-*Clementine Homilies* (*ep. Clem.* 8): "Work for him who can work, charity for him who cannot." The duty of providing work was especially binding in the case of those for whom conversion necessitated the abandonment of their old means of livelihood. Cyprian deals with a case of this sort—that of an ex-actor. He holds either the practice or the teaching of the dramatic art to be incompatible with the Christian profession. On the other hand, the man must not be allowed to starve. "If," he writes, "such a person allege penury, and the straits of poverty, he may receive assistance among those who are maintained by the nourishment supplied by the Church, provided that he is satisfied with simple and wholesome fare" (*Ep.* 2). Willingness to accept the work provided was regarded as a test of *bona fides.*

An interesting passage in the *Didache* (12) makes this clear: " Let everyone who cometh in the name of the Lord be received and then, having tested him, ye shall have understanding of true and false. If he who cometh is a traveller, help him as much as ye can: he shall not tarry with you more than two or three days if it be necessary. And if he desire to abide with you, being a craftsman, let him work and eat. And if he hath not a craft, according to your wisdom take counsel that he may not live among you as an idler. But if he will not do so he is a trafficker in Christ. Keep yourselves from such." We observe that the *duty* of providing work is here explicitly recognized.

(*d*) *Prisoners and those confined in the mines.*—The visitation of prisoners (especially of those confined for the sake of their faith) was an important Christian duty. It formed part of the functions of the diaconate. Here again, too, private Christians took their share in discharging it. Aristides, in his *Apology* (15), writes thus of the Christians: "And if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs and, if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him." So Tertullian, in the opening sentence of his *Exhortatio ad martyres*, expresses his intention of mingling some spiritual nourishment with "the aliments of the flesh which both our Lady Mother the Church and the brethren singly from their private store supply" to those whom he addresses as " blessed martyrs elect " in prison. The same writer also speaks of pious women " creeping into a prison to kiss the chains of a martyr" (*Ad. uxor.*, ii. 4). We are told by Eusebius concerning the youthful Origen that "not only was he at the side of the holy martyrs in their imprisonment and until their final condemnation, but when they were led to death he boldly accompanied them into danger" (*H. E.*, vi. 3). Lucian, in his curious biography of a wandering sophist called *The Death of Peregrinus Proteus* (12 *f.*),[45] gives a vivid description of the zeal with which the devotees of the new religion would crowd to the prison to help one of their persecuted brethren. Having described how the hero of his narrative became a Christian and was soon after arrested, he goes on: "The Christians took it all very seriously: he was no sooner in prison than they began trying every means to get him out again—but without success. Everything else that could be done for him they most devoutly did. They thought of nothing else. Orphans and ancient widows might be seen hanging about the prison from break of day. Their officials bribed the gaolers to let them stay inside with him. Elegant dinners were conveyed in: their sacred writings were read: and our old friend Peregrine . . . became for them the 'modern Socrates.' In some of the Asiatic cities, too, the Christian communities put themselves to the expense of sending deputations, with offers of sympathy, assistance and legal advice. The activity of these people in dealing with any matter that affects their community is something extraordinary: they spare no trouble, no expense. Peregrine all this time was making quite an income on the strength of his bondage: money came pouring in. . . . [The Christians] despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls and his future is pretty soon made: he plays with them." Lucian here unmistakably implies that among the so-called Christian "confessors" were to be found certain dubious characters, who found it worth while even to get themselves put into prison for the sake of the money and luxuries with which the generosity of their fellow-Christians would supply them. Tertullian makes the same charge in his (Montanist) work *De jejuniis* (12), speaking bitterly of the "cookshops provided for doubtful martyrs in the prisons," and even of the "medicated wine" by which the pain of the torture was to be deadened. It must be admitted, however, that there is a certain inherent improbability in the charge: nor, perhaps, can either the atheist Lucian or the schismatic Tertullian be regarded as an altogether reliable witness in such a matter. In any case—and this for us is the main point—the zeal of Christians in fulfilling what must have been an expensive and, still more, a highly dangerous duty is beyond possibility of doubt. A further striking witness to this zeal is afforded by the statement of Eusebius that the Emperor Licinius made an enactment "that no one should exercise humanity towards the sufferers in prison by giving them food. . . . And in addition to this, it was also decreed as a punishment that those who showed compassion should suffer the same things with those whom they compassionated . . ." (*H. E.*, x. 8). In some cases prisoners were not only assisted and relieved, but ransomed. This, however, seems never to have been undertaken by the Church as a body, but was left to the generosity of private individuals. A truly heroic form of self-sacrifice is that described in the *Epistle* of Clement of Rome (55): "We know that many among ourselves have surrendered themselves to bondage that thereby they might free others: many have given themselves up to slavery and provided food for others with the price they received for themselves." In the *Didascalia* (iv. 9) we find the following command: "Out of the money accruing from honest labour . . . distribute for the redeeming of the faithful, ransoming slaves and captives, prisoners and those who . . . are condemned to the wild beasts or to the mines or to exile." The same solicitude which was bestowed upon Christians in prison was also accorded to those condemned to the distant mines of Sardinia and Cilicia. Here, again, the Roman church distinguished itself by its unselfishness and liberality, as is shown by a letter of Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.*, iv. 23). Hippolytus informs us that the Roman Bishop, Victor, kept a list of Christians condemned to the Sardinian mines, and procured their liberation from the Emperor Commodus through the influence of the latter's mistress, Marcia (*Philos.*, ix. 7). Eusebius, in his treatise *Concerning the Palestinian Martyrs* (10), recounts how certain Christians of Egypt "were arrested by those who were stationed at the gates to observe those who passed by: they had gone to minister to the confessors in Cilicia." All were mutilated: three were martyred. A regular church was formed in the mines at Phæno. Again, in the *Didascalia* (v. 1), we read: "If any Christian is for the name of God condemned by the ungodly to . . . the mines, do not turn your eyes away from him, but from your labour and sweat send something for his support, that he may give a gratuity to the soldiers."

(*e*) *Burial of the dead.*—Aristides, in his *Apology* (15), speaking of the Christians, says that "whenever one of their poor passes from the world one of them looks after him and sees to his burial according to his means." Tertullian describes the same good work as one of the charitable objects which were met out of the Church's common fund (*Apolog.*, 39). The ancient world attached great importance to decent burial: and the stress laid by Christianity on the sacredness of the body, as partaking in the work of redemption, would tend rather to strengthen than to diminish the feeling. "We cannot bear," says Lactantius, "that the image and workmanship of God should be thrown as a prey to wild beasts and birds, but we restore it to the earth from which it was taken and fulfil the office of relatives even to an unknown man, since in their room humanity must step in" (*Inst.*, vi. 12). The provision of proper burial for all was one of the duties of the deacons. In this connection we may note the relation between the Christian Churches and the so-called *collegia tenuiorum*, which were widely spread among the poorer folk of the great cities of the time.[46] Of such *collegia* burial societies were the commonest, though not (as is sometimes supposed) the only, kind. It was under this guise that the Christian communities sought to secure a legal cover for their existence. Besides providing Christian burial for the dead, the Church also allowed the offering of oblations for their souls. Thus Tertullian represents a wife offering for her dead husband on the anniversary of his decease to procure for him eternal repose and a share in the first resurrection (*De monog.*, 10). A principle was thus early laid down which was to receive an enormous development as time went on.

(*f*) *Hospitality and assistance of other churches.*—We have already seen that the entertainment of travelling brethren from other churches played an important part in the life of the early Church: and that nothing did more to bind together the various scattered communities into one great Church Catholic. The insistence on hospitality which we have noted in the New Testament is echoed in the writers of the second century. We have already seen how Clement speaks of the hospitality of the Corinthian church as one of the most praiseworthy features of its unspoiled state. "Who that hath sojourned among you . . . hath not proclaimed the splendour of your hospitality?" (1 *Clem.*, 1. 2). Later on he more than once exhorts his readers to cultivate this quality. Hermas is particularly emphatic as to the duty of Christians in this regard. Clearly exceptional scope and need for it existed at Rome, to and from which, as the centre of the civilized world and the seat of one of the greatest of churches, there was a continual coming and going of fellow-Christians. Hospitality was in a special degree the duty of the ἐπίσκοποι, who, in this as in other respects, acted no doubt as the representatives of the community. Hermas speaks of "hospitable ἐπίσκοποι who have always received gladly into their houses the servants of God without hypocrisy" (*Sim.*, ix. 27). But the duty was also shared by private individuals (*ibid.*, viii. 10. 3). The church of Rome seems, indeed, to have been notable beyond all other churches for its munificence in this matter. Other churches, however, practised the same virtue according to their power. Aristides, in his *Apology* (15), tells us that "if Christians see a stranger, they bring him under their roof and rejoice over him as over a very brother." So, too, Justin (1 *Ap.*, 67) includes "stranger sojourners" among those who receive assistance from the offerings of the faithful at the Eucharist. Tertullian, again, in warning against marriage with a heathen husband, asks the question: "If a stranger brother come, what lodging for him in an alien's house? If a gift is to be made to any, the barn, the storehouse are closed" (*Ad uxor.*, ii. 4). Writing from his place of refuge during the Decian persecution to the clergy of Carthage, Cyprian gives the following instructions: "I beg you to attend carefully to widows and sick folk and all who are poor. Pray also pay the expenses of any strangers who may be in need out of my own portion" (*Ep.* 7). It is easy to see what golden possibilities a hospitality so ample held out to the idle and dishonest. The case of the egregious Peregrinus Proteus in Lucian's satire was no doubt typical of others. After his release from prison "Proteus set out again on his wanderings. The Christians were meat and drink to him: under their protection he lacked nothing, and this luxurious state of things went on for some time" (*op. cit.*, 16). We have already noticed the precautions suggested in the *Didache* as a safeguard against such abuses.

The assistance afforded to the individual Christian from outside was not less readily forthcoming when a whole church was in need of help. It has been shown how willingly St. Paul accepted, in the name of the Gentile churches, the duty of contributing to the support of "the poor saints at Jerusalem." With the advent of persecution, a wide field was opened for this mutual helpfulness of churches among one another. No one, for instance, can read the letters of Ignatius without being struck by the almost agonized interest and concern with which the fate of the Bishop of Antioch is regarded by the whole Christendom of Asia Minor. As the fiery old man pursues his last pilgrimage across that region towards the wild beasts of the Roman amphitheatre, the representatives of the Asiatic churches are waiting for him at one point after another with messages of encouragement and such means of assistance as they can provide. Here again, too, the church of Rome distinguished itself. Its noble charity included not individuals only but whole churches in its wide embrace, causing Ignatius to bestow upon it the proud title προκαθημένη τῆς ἀγάπης (*Rom.*, introd.). Not less honourable is the tribute paid to it by

Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, in a letter written in the time of Marcus Aurelius and preserved by Eusebius (*H. E.*, iv. 23): " From the beginning it has been your practice to do good to all the brethren in various ways and to send contributions to many churches in every city. Thus relieving the want of the needy and making provision for the brethren in the mines by the gifts which you have sent from the beginning, you Romans keep up the hereditary customs of the Romans, which your blessed Bishop Soter has not only maintained but also added to, furnishing an abundance of supplies to the saints and encouraging the brethren from abroad with blessed words, as a loving father his children." It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the extent to which this interest in other churches, and sense of responsibility for their welfare, contributed to the rise of the Roman church to its unique position in Christendom. It even sent help to the churches of Syria and Arabia.[47] So, too, Bishop Dionysius (259-69) sent money to Cappadocia on its behalf for the purpose of ransoming certain Christians who had been carried away by the barbarians.[48] Nor did the church of Carthage lag far behind its Roman sister—at least, when Cyprian was its Bishop. The correspondence of Cyprian abounds in proofs of his affectionate solicitude for other churches—notably the splendid letter (*Ep.* 62) which he addressed to the Bishops of Numidia on hearing that many Christians of both sexes had been seized and carried into captivity by Berber raiders. " Who," he writes, " would not make his brother's grief his own? . . . We must consider the imprisonment of our brethren as our imprisonment. Our union makes of us a single body: and we ought to be stirred and strengthened not only by love but also by religious duty to redeem the members of our brethren." He has therefore made a collection for the ransom of the captives and forwards the proceeds—amounting to 100,000 sesterces (nearly £1,000)—to be used for this purpose. He also adds: "Should the like occur again for a test of our love and faith, do not hesitate to write of it to us: be sure that while our church and the whole Church pray fervently that this may not recur, yet should it do so, they will gladly and generously contribute."

(*g*) *Care for the victims of great calamities.*—The terrible scourges which visited the various parts of the Roman world during the third century supplied the Christians with a grand opportunity for the exercise of their charitable energies. Of this opportunity they did not fail to avail themselves: nor was it only their fellow-Christians who were the objects of their care. Their self-sacrificing devotion was a striking contrast to the selfishness and cowardice of the pagan population. The *Life of Cyprian*, written by his Deacon, Pontius, thus describes the conduct of the great Bishop when the plague attacked the city of Carthage in A.D. 252 (ch. 9 *f.*): "A dreadful pestilence broke out afterwards, and the extraordinary ravages of a loathsome plague entered house after house of the trembling populace in succession, carrying off with sudden violence numberless people daily, each from his own home. There was a general panic, flight, shrinking from the infection, unnatural exposure of infected friends: as though to carry the dying out of doors were to shut out death itself. Meanwhile multitudes lay about the whole city, no longer bodies but corpses: and implored the pity of passers-by. No one looked to anything except his own cruel gain. . . . No one did to another what he wished done to himself." Pontius then goes on to describe how Cyprian "assembled the people in one place, and instructed them in the excellence of mercifulness" and the need of imitating the undiscriminating love of God. "We should answer to our birth (*respondere natalibus*)," he cries, in a magnificent and untranslatable phrase. "It is not fit that they should be degenerate who are known to have been born again of God. . . ." "Accordingly," continues the writer, "ministrations are divided among them at once according to the rank and circumstances of each. Many who from stress of poverty were unable to provide costly benefits provided what was more than costliness: by their personal toil doing other services more precious than all riches. Who, indeed, under such a teacher, but must hasten to be occupied in some part of that warfare? . . . Accordingly, in the generosity of their abounding charity, they did good to all, and not only to the household of faith." The same pestilence (which seems to have been for a long time endemic within the Empire) attacked Alexandria *circa* 259. The heroism of the Christians of that city was not less than that of their Carthaginian brethren, and is thus described by their Bishop, Dionysius:[49] "The most of our brethren were unsparing in their exceeding love and brotherly kindness. They held fast to each other and visited the sick fearlessly and ministered to them continually, serving them in Christ. And they died with them most joyfully, taking the afflictions of others, and drawing the sickness from their neighbours to themselves and willingly receiving their pains. And many who cared for the sick and gave strength to others died themselves, having transferred to themselves their death. . . . This form of death seemed to lack nothing of martyrdom. And they took the bodies of the saints in their open hands and in their bosoms and closed their eyes and their mouths: and they bore them away on their shoulders and led them out: and they clung to them and embraced them: and they prepared them suitably with washings and garments. And after a little they received like treatment themselves, for the survivors were continually following those who had gone before them. But with the heathen everything was quite different. They deserted those who began to be sick and fled from their dearest friends. And they cast them out into the streets when they were half dead: and left the dead, like refuse, unburied." When a great plague broke out nearly fifty years later in the reign of Maximin Daza, the behaviour of the Christians, according to Eusebius (*H.E.*, ix. 8), was equally noble. "Then did the evidences of the universal zeal and piety of the Christians become manifest to all the brethren. For they alone, in the midst of such ills, showed their sympathy and humanity by their deeds. Every day some continued caring for and burying the dead, for there were multitudes who had no one to care for them. Others collected in one place those who were afflicted by the famine throughout the entire city and gave bread to them all: so that the thing became noised abroad among all men." No wonder that "men glorified the God of the Christians: and convinced by the facts themselves, confessed that they alone were truly pious and religious."

II

We have seen some of the chief needs for which Christian charity sought to provide. In what ways were the means forthcoming for a beneficence so extensive and multifarious? The distinguishing feature of the charity of this period is, as Uhlhorn says, its "congregational" character.[50] Of course, then as always, private individuals were at liberty to do good in their own way, if and how they chose. But such private charity was always regarded as strictly secondary to that exercised by the Church *as a body.* At this time the various churches were still comparatively small communities in which everybody knew everybody else: the great majority of members, too, were actively interested in the affairs and fortunes of their church. Thus the corporate spirit was strongly developed: and this expressed itself in corporate well-doing. It was the church, as such, which received the alms of the faithful: it was the church, as such, which distributed them. Each individual church, in fact, was a highly-organized "friendly society."

The regular income of a church came from two sources, the relations between which are not very easy to define.

(1) In the first place, there were the money-contributions of the faithful paid into the church chest. It is these, apparently, which Tertullian describes under the name of *stips*. In the famous account of the church-life of his time, in chapter 39 of his *Apologeticus*, he says: "Even if there be with us a sort of treasury, no sum is therein collected from a sense of obligation, as though religion were bought. Every man places therein a small gift on one day in each month or whensoever he will, so he do but will and so he be but able: for no man is constrained, but contributes willingly. These are, as it were, the deposits of piety: for afterwards they are not spent in feasting and in drinking and in disgusting haunts of gluttony, but in feeding and burying the poor, on boys and girls without money and without parents and on old men now house-ridden, on the ship-wrecked also and on any who are in the mines or in the islands or in the prisons and have thus become the pensioners of their creed, so that it be only for the sake of the way of God." Tertullian is here contrasting the use to which the Christians put their common funds with that prevailing among the heathen *collegia*—in the one case charity, in the other mere self-indulgence. It is therefore natural to suppose that the *stips* corresponded to the weekly or monthly payments which formed a

regular part of the organization of the *collegia*. It must not be forgotten that it was under the guise of such *collegia tenuiorum* that the Christians sought to secure a means of escape from the terrors of the law. A similar account is given by Justin Martyr in his description of the Christian worship: "Those who are well-to-do and who desire to give, give freely, each one what he wills, and what is collected is given to the president who assists" the various classes of needy persons (1 *Apol.* 67). The church-chest is called by Tertullian *arca*: in Cyprian and the *Apostolical Constitutions* the term used is *corbona*. Cyprian thus addresses the stingy rich woman: "Thou art rich and wealthy and thinkest thou that thou dost keep the feast of the Lord, thou who dost never vouchsafe a glance at the *corbona*?" (*De op. et el.*, 15). So, in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, we read: "Cast into the *corbona* what thou canst and so share with strangers one or two or five lepta" (ii. 36).

(2) Still more important than the *stips* as a source of income were the oblations made by the faithful at the beginning of the Eucharist. These were made in kind: and it was from the bread and wine provided in this way that the sacred elements for the Lord's Supper were taken. In the passage just quoted Cyprian speaks scornfully of the rich woman who "comes into the Lord's house without a sacrifice and takes part out of that sacrifice which the poor has offered." Readers of *Marius the Epicurean* will not easily forget Pater's beautiful description of the ceremony—how "men and women came to the altar successively, in

perfect order, and deposited below the lattice-work of pierced white marble, their baskets of wheat and grapes, incense, oil for the sanctuary lamps; bread and wine especially—pure wheaten bread, the pure white wine of the Tusculan vineyards."[51] The oblations were not confined to bread and wine, but included (at least at first) all kinds of natural products. It was from the store provided in this way that sustenance was afforded to the sick and needy, who were thus regarded as receiving their daily bread from God Himself. "It is the grace of the Lord and philanthropy that support them," writes Cornelius, Bishop of Rome.[52] The greater part of the oblations was, however, consumed probably at the Agapæ.[53] It is well known that, at a quite early period, the Eucharist came to be separated from the Agape, owing to the abuses which arose from the combination of the two. But the Agapæ continued to be held—except for a short time under the régime of Trajan, when they were suppressed—and must have been specially useful as a means of providing free meals for the poorer members of the church. It is from this point of view that Tertullian sings their praises in the *Apologeticus* (39). "*Our* feast," he writes (in contrast with the feasts of the heathen), "shows its nature in its name. It is named by the word by which love is called among the Greeks. Whatever expense it costs, outlay incurred in the name of piety is a gain, seeing that by this refreshment we aid the poor. Not, as with you, do parasites aspire to the glory of enslaving their liberty and of exposing themselves to insult for the sake of a full belly, but, even as with God, peculiar respect is shown to men of low degree." It must be admitted, however, that Tertullian the Montanist draws a very different picture of the Agapæ in his *De jejuniis* (17), where he describes them as mere occasions for gluttony and wine-bibbing and even worse things. No doubt a good deal of prejudice enters into this picture: yet it is equally indubitable that, as time went on, such abuses actually did arise in connection with the Agapæ and led the authorities to frown upon them.

In addition to these normal sources of income, the Church's funds would now and then receive a windfall in the shape of some large gift of money from a wealthy neophyte. Cyprian, for example, on becoming a Christian, sold all his property "to feed the poor." So, too, when Marcion came from Asia Minor to Rome *circa* 139, he presented the Roman church with the sum of 200,000 sesterces. After the donor's lapse into heresy the money was returned.[54] Again, when some special need arose, a collection would be made to meet it. We have already seen how Cyprian succeeded in raising 100,000 sesterces from members of the Carthaginian church in order to redeem certain Numidian Christians who were held to ransom by robbers.

It was not uncommon for the poorer sort of Christians to fast in order that they might have more to give. Thus we read in the *Didascalia* (v. 1): "If a man has nothing, let him fast and distribute the day's portion to the brethren." The same idea is found in Hermas: "The day on which thou fastest thou shalt taste nothing at all but bread and water. Having reckoned up the price of the dishes which thou wouldst have eaten that day, thou shalt give it to the widow or the orphan or the needy" (*Sim.*, v. 3).

In the latter part of this period we see a tendency developing to apply to Christians (at least as a matter of theoretical duty) the Old Testament law of first-fruits and tithes. The very suggestion was in itself a confession of weakness: for it indicated that the old readiness of voluntary giving was passing away and that a need was beginning to be felt for external regulations to take the place of inward impulse. It is significant that Irenæus holds that such payments are no longer binding, on the express ground that they are no longer necessary. "Those," he says, "who have received freedom give cheerfully *all* that they possess, and therefore do not need to give anything less" (*Adv. haer.*, iv. 18). This argument, however, was not long in losing its validity. It is in Origen that we discover a first tentative hint that the practice of the Old Covenant might be made the practice also of the New. In his Homilies on Numbers (*Hom.* xi., 1), speaking of the Levitical law of first-fruits, he says: "I think that it is necessary that this law should be observed even literally, as also some others. For there are a few commandments of the Law which the disciples even of the New Testament keep by an obligatory observance." The Homilies on Joshua (*Hom.* xvii.) contain a passage to the same effect: and in the fragment on Proverbs (iii. 9) Origen says categorically: "The first-fruits of all kinds of produce ought to be given to the Church and the poor." It is significant that, in Cyprian, the same idea is found in close conjunction with a lament over the diminished generosity of Christians. "Among us bountifulness in works of charity is greatly decayed. Then [*i.e.* in the Apostolic age] they gave houses and lands for sale and laying up for themselves treasures in heaven offered the price to the Apostles to be distributed for the use of the needy. But now we give not even the tithes from our property" (*De unit. eccl.*, 26). The suggestion, however, remained for a long time no more than a pious aspiration. The obligation of such payments was not yet recognized, still less enforced.

The Church's agents in the distribution of her alms were the deacons. Their function, however, was purely ministerial. The responsibility for the administration of charitable funds, as of Church funds generally, rested with the presbyterate and, later, with the Bishop. The *Epistle* of Polycarp makes this quite clear. "Let the presbyters," he says, "be merciful, charitable towards all, looking after all who are sick, not neglecting the widows or the orphan or the poor man" (6. 1). Again, it is Valens the presbyter who has been guilty of misappropriating Church funds (11). The testimony of Hermas is to the same effect. He speaks of ἐπίσκοποι "who have unweariedly protected the poor and the widows in their ministry" (*Sim.*, ix. 27). With the triumph of the monarchical episcopate the dependence of the deacons became still more marked. They assumed the position of the bishop's personal staff: and as such they were expected to do nothing without his cognizance. The *Didascalia* admonishes them thus: " Everything that ye do indicate to the bishop, and let it be performed through him. If thou knowest that any one is seriously ill and the bishop knows it not, tell him. Do nothing without him for fear that thou involve him in disgrace as a neglecter of the poor " (ii. 31). The functions of deacons are thus described in the *Apostolical Church Order* (22): " They are to be doers of good works, exercising a general supervision day and night, neither scorning the poor, nor respecting the person of the rich: they must ascertain who are in distress and not exclude them from a share in the Church's funds, compelling also the well-to-do to put money aside for good works." Besides the deacons there were also deaconesses who fulfilled on behalf of women the functions discharged by the deacons in the case of men. This at least was the case in the East. In the West the female diaconate was still unknown. As described in the *Didascalia*, the duties of deaconesses were threefold: (1) to visit Christian women in pagan households; (2) to attend on women who were sick and to wash convalescents; (3) to discharge certain duties in connection with the baptism of women.[55] In the third century too (though not, apparently, before) widows seem to have been expected to make some return for their support by the Church by rendering varying kinds of ministerial service—especially in regard to sick women: but this, it must be repeated, was only an incident, not the *raison d'être*, of their position. In the *Apostolical Church Order* (21) we read: " Let three widows be appointed; two to continue in prayer for all who are tempted . . . and one to devote herself to women afflicted with diseases." In order to ensure that none of the Church's dependents should be forgotten, a register was kept of those who had to be maintained.

The large sums handled by the Church's officials were sometimes a temptation to dishonesty. The case of Valens the presbyter has been already mentioned: and Polycarp's almost wearisomely reiterated warnings against covetousness show how deeply he felt the stain on the Church's shield. Hermas, too, speaks of "deacons who have fulfilled their ministry ill and have dissipated the living of widows and orphans, and have made gain for themselves out of the ministry with which they have been entrusted" (*Sim.*, ix. 26). It is clear, however, that such cases were not more than occasional exceptions. For the most part the trust seems to have been faithfully exercised.

PART III

THE CHURCH UNDER CONSTANTINE AND HIS SUCCESSORS

CHAPTER I

THE COLLAPSE OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATION

Before attempting to estimate the scope and worth of the social action of Christianity, now become the official religion of the Empire, under Constantine and his successors, it is necessary to form for ourselves some picture of the society upon which that action was brought into play. It was not a very hopeful field. The forces of internal disintegration which, even more than the barbarian invasions, were to bring down the old order in ruin and disaster, were already actively at work: and their effects only became more clearly visible as the years passed by. The ancient world was indeed dying by inches, even though those who lived in it showed themselves quite unable to realize the fact. It cannot be said that there was anything surprising in this blindness. The sense of Rome's greatness, the faith in her destiny, so dominated the minds and hearts of all her subjects, pagan and Christian alike, that it was impossible for them to conceive her sway otherwise than as eternal. Augustine's "City of God" stands as a memorial for all time of the agony of bewilderment with which the whole *orbis Romanus* witnessed the defilement of her sacred soil by a barbarian conqueror. Yet the conviction which had been so rudely shaken was not overthrown.

It was believed that the time of trial and (in the eyes of Christians at least) of chastisement would pass: and the majesty of Rome would stand forth once more in its old splendour. Nor did this faith go unsupported by works. If the process of dissolution went on, it was not for lack of attempts to check it. Diocletian had reorganized the system of administration throughout its whole extent: and Constantine still further developed his work. The Theodosian Code is the record of a century's ceaseless struggle to remedy the maladies of the body politic—a struggle in which the supreme authority did not hesitate to employ the sanction of the most formidable penalties to secure obedience. But it was all in vain. The slow, deadly rot went inexorably on: and too often the remedies only served to aggravate the disease.

The causes of the evil were partly moral, partly economic. The moral sickness of the time showed itself more particularly in two directions—lack of public spirit and love of money. The old willingness (which had done so much to make Rome great) to sacrifice private convenience and gain to the welfare of the State was by this time a thing of the past—and most of all in the higher and wealthier orders of society. The imperial government must bear a great part of the blame for this. Like the monarchy of the *ancien régime* in France, it had deprived the aristocracy of all effective power in public affairs: and so condemned it to almost inevitable idleness and futility. But this excuse cannot be made to justify the wretched selfishness with which the large and increasing senatorial class sought by every means to shift off its burdens on to the back of the classes below it. Possessed, in any case, of more than its due share of wealth, this class grew richer and richer as the other classes grew poorer and poorer. If it lacked political power, at least it did not lack social interest: and this was steadily used on its own behalf, even to the extent of perverting the course of justice. But if the great landowners were grasping and selfish, their rapacity was exceeded by that of the imperial officials, both high and low. The number of these was legion: and the main object of nearly all was to extract as much as possible from the public. Every form of chicane and fraud, every ingenuity of extortion, was resorted to: and the imperial edicts which refer to them reveal at the same time the extent of the evil and the impotence of the central authority to check the misdoings of its own agents. It is certain that its efforts were sincere, and prompted by a genuine desire to secure the welfare of the harassed victims. But it was no longer able to make its control effective: and the crowd of greedy and corrupt officials—*susceptores*, *discussores*, *actuarii*, and the rest—continued to descend like a swarm of locusts upon the unfortunate provincials.

Even the soundest system, if administered by such agents, could hardly be expected to work satisfactorily. But the imperial system was far from sound. The bureaucratic organization which had been introduced by Diocletian and developed and extended ever since, was already beginning to sink by its own weight. The expenses of the government continually increased. A Court in which even the most insignificant details of existence were surrounded by an oriental pomp and splendour was very expensive to keep up. The defence of the Empire, owing to the unwarlike character of its home-born subjects, had to be entrusted to barbarian mercenaries who sold their services more and more dearly. Moreover, bureaucracies notoriously exhibit a tendency to increase rapidly both in the number and the extravagance of their officials. Thus the demands on the taxpayer grew steadily greater, while his capacity to pay grew steadily less. Invasion, civil war, famine, pestilence, all depleted his stock of possessions: and the situation was further aggravated by the misguided policy of the government. The unsettled times were unfavourable in any case to industry and commerce: but the government did not do even what it might have done for their encouragement. Moreover, the system by which numerous trades were organized in hereditary guilds (the son being bound to follow his father's calling whether he liked it or not) must have seriously hampered industrial and commercial enterprise, by destroying all freedom of movement. Society was becoming stereotyped, an almost oriental hierarchy of castes. The result of the inevitable paralysis that ensued was a lack of floating capital, which reacted immediately on the agrarian situation. For the smaller landowner, unable to secure a loan to tide him over temporary difficulties, found himself compelled to sell his property to any wealthy neighbour who wished to buy it. The tendency to form *latifundia* by the expropriation of the small-holders, which had been regarded as a grave social danger ever since the days of the Republic, was thus stimulated rather than checked.

The effect of the situation that has been described is especially seen in that decay of the middle class which is the most striking social phenomenon of the later Empire. The situation of this class became daily more intolerable. The financial demands of the government fell more heavily upon them than upon any other class: and payment was ruthlessly enforced. The free municipal government of former times had disappeared: and the descendants of the old and once opulent civic families no longer enjoyed any privilege but that of being fleeced. The members of the local curia, called *curiales*, comprised all those residents within the municipal area who owned more than twenty-five *jugera* of land. They were charged with the duty of assessing and collecting the imperial taxes due from their district: and if (as was usually the case) there were difficulty in raising the required sum, they were held personally responsible for the whole amount and had to make good the deficiency out of their own pockets. Besides this, they were also charged with duties in connection with the military commissariat and the imperial postal system, to say nothing of their responsibility for the whole machinery of local administration, including its debts and deficits. So crushing was the burden that a wholesale "flight of the *curiales*" set in. In vain the Code emphasized the dignity of the curial's position, and multiplied its measures to prevent him from deserting his post. The flight went on: and the absconding of the fugitives only increased the burden of those who remained behind. "The *curia* had in truth become an *ergastulum*." Men would gladly forgo all their property if, by doing so, they could shake off the intolerable responsibility accompanying its possession. Their one fear was to be restored by force to the prison-house from which they had escaped. The flight from the State was often a flight into the Church. Some *curiales* took holy orders or became monks and hermits: until the government stepped in to prohibit this method of eluding their obligations. Others joined the ranks of the artisans: and still more hid themselves as serfs on the estate of some rich proprietor.

When to these internal causes of economic decay there was added also the shock of calamities coming from outside, it can easily be imagined that the time was one of terrible poverty and distress. The barbarian invasions must have caused an immense amount of suffering: even though (according to Salvian) the coming of the conquerors was frequently welcomed by the populations as an evil at least more endurable than the tyranny it overthrew. Famine and pestilence followed as usual in the wake of war: and the inefficiency of the police system made possible an alarming development of brigandage. Many were tempted by poverty to take up this mode of life. So great was the distress that parents even sold their children into slavery in order to get bread. And while the poor became poorer, the rich became richer. At the same time the power of the rich senatorial class showed signs of increasing side by side with its wealth. The beginnings of the feudal system now come into view. Amid the disorders and dangers of the time, men were glad to place themselves under the protection of a powerful patron: while the smaller landowner, becoming involved in debt to some neighbouring magnate, would frequently surrender to him his land and continue to cultivate it as his tenant. The unscrupulous greed of the great proprietors made them only too glad to take advantage of the necessities of their poorer neighbours: and the venality and corruption of the local tribunals were often exploited for the purpose. The arrival of fugitive *curiales* still further swelled the number of these dependents, who tended more and more to approximate to the status of *coloni* or serfs. Thus, from every point of view, the social system had broken down. Nor did the triumph of Christianity avail to stay its collapse. The tendency of the new State religion was, indeed, in some ways to make things worse rather than better. The ascetic ideal was by this time triumphant in the Church: and under its influence the best and most self-denying characters of the time sought to flee from the temporal order altogether rather than to help to better it. In spite of the repeated attempts of the Apologists to make them out to be good citizens, the Christians had never really had much love for the Empire. Their interest, in any case, was much more in the "City of God" than in any human polity. Thus, if Constantine hoped by means of Christianity to infuse new life into the veins of a decrepit political and social organization, the event hardly served to justify his expectations.

[The account here given is based upon the materials provided in bk. iii. of Dill's *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire.*]

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE GREAT CHURCH DOCTORS

THE recognition of Christianity by Constantine as the official religion of the Roman Empire was an immense triumph for the Church: but a great price had to be paid for it. It is highly probable that the price was worth paying. The Church exists not for its own sake but for the sake of the world: and it is impossible to exaggerate the tremendous opportunities for purifying and uplifting human life that its new position placed within its reach. Even more important than the services that it could render to the dying Empire of Rome, was the part which it was now in a position to play in training and educating the young, vigorous nations from the north. On the other hand, from the point of view of the Church's internal life, the change was very far from being a change for the better. We discern a sudden sharp fall in the moral and spiritual temperature, so far at least as the generality of Christians is concerned. As long as the age of persecution lasted, the worldly and self-seeking would not find it worth while to incur the risks of professing a *religio illicita*. Thus " dead " members were few in number: and the flame of brotherly love (in particular) burnt bright and warm. The danger of a persecuted Church is, indeed, always in the direction of an exaggeration, rather than a weakening, of the corporate sense. After its triumph under Constantine, however, the Church became not only safe but fashionable. At once all the well-known evils attendant on an "Establishment" manifested themselves. Crowds of aristocratic and self-seeking worldlings pressed within the Church's portals, together with the inevitable stream of parasites and beggars. The church of Antioch of Chrysostom's time, with its 100,000 or so members,[56] of whom the rich grudged to give and the poor only wanted to receive, must have been a strangely different body from the same church in the time of Ignatius. The very size of the churches was a main difficulty. They had become so large that, even had the desire for fellowship been more powerful than it actually was, such fellowship would have been hard to realize. The old "family" feeling had gone, and could not be recovered. That "enthusiasm of humanity," which was the hall-mark of the earliest generations of Christians, had not entirely disappeared: but it was the characteristic of the few rather than of the many. Yet never was the need so great. It was, as we have seen, a time of deep poverty and distress. The dissolution of an ancient and comprehensive social order had let loose upon the civilized world the whole sum of ills to which flesh is heir. Fortunately for itself and mankind, the Church produced at this time some of the most commanding figures in its history—saints who by sheer force of personality and ardour of love did much to compensate for the lukewarmness of the mass of Christians. But (as we shall see), in order that the needful resources might be forthcoming, it was necessary to appeal to less and less exalted motives, with the result that many of the worst abuses of the Middle Ages in regard to pecuniary compensation for sin have their origin in this period. Unfortunately, too, the leading Churchmen were by no means universally men of the stamp of Chrysostom and Augustine and Ambrose. A peculiarly detestable type of Court prelate became all too common: and the great wealth of the bishops supplied a constant temptation to luxury and ambition. The professed Christianity of rulers and statesmen, also, was often the merest veneer. In consequence, the policy and legislation of the State during this period showed much less trace of Christian influence than might have been hoped for. The humanization of the penal code under Stoic influence, which we have already remarked during the earlier imperial period, is hardly maintained. The selfishness of the opulent aristocracy, the rapacity and corruption of officialdom, remain unchecked. Worst of all, the Church, no longer persecuted, turns persecutor: and with a ruthlessness that the pagan Empire never knew.

Thus, from the point of view of the establishment of a better social order, the Christianization of the Empire must be written down a failure. In some ways Christianity even accelerated the pace of the political and social disintegration which was everywhere in progress. It is impossible to deny that changes for the better were made in certain directions. But, generally speaking, the trend of events was too strong for the Church: and even if the circumstances had been more favourable than they actually were, its growing secularization would have rendered it unsuitable to attempt great constructive tasks. The difficulty was the same as that which cripples similar efforts to-day—the impossibility of constructing a perfect society out of very imperfect materials. More and more the Church's effort assumed the character of mere relief work carried on by a devoted minority in the teeth of the worldliness and indifference of the majority. But from this point of view how magnificent it was! History provides few such examples of the triumph of personality over every adverse circumstance as is presented by the lives of the great Churchmen of the fourth and fifth centuries. In the sphere of doctrine it was *Athanasius contra mundum*. In the sphere of charity it was a Chrysostom or Augustine literally wringing money out of the pockets of rich and most unwilling worldlings by sheer energy of eloquence and conviction—and that at a time when many of their fellow-bishops were as worldly as the flocks which they were supposed to, but did not, tend. Such men made themselves the mouthpiece of poor and suffering humanity, acted as its "ambassadors" (to use their own phrase) to the rich. In an impassioned discourse on almsgiving, Chrysostom has described with singular vividness the spectacle of suffering which left him no choice but to make an immediate appeal for its relief. We see the great orator hurrying to church on a cold winter's day through the streets of Antioch, his heart aflame with pity and indignation at the sights that met his gaze. Thus he begins: "I stand here to-day . . . to discharge a just and honourable mission towards yourselves. To this I have been appointed by . . . the poor who dwell in our city: and that not by words nor by voting-papers nor in virtue of a common resolution, but by sights most pitiful and sad. For as I passed through the market-place and the lanes on my way to meet you, I saw . . . many lying prostrate, some with their hands cut off, others with their eyes put out, others again full of incurable sores and wounds. . . . I esteemed that it would be inhuman not to speak of these persons to your charity, especially seeing that . . . the weather is an additional incentive to such an appeal. For at all times it is right to utter words on behalf of charity . . . but especially at the present season, when the cold is severe," and (as the speaker goes on to point out) there is a dearth not only of food but of opportunities for finding work (*De Eleemosyna Sermo*, 1). Augustine speaks to precisely the same effect in one of his sermons: "Give to the poor therefore: I ask you, I exhort you, I bid you, I command you. . . . I will not hide from you the reason why I have thought it necessary to address you thus. For as I go to and from church, the poor accost me and bid me speak to you: and when they see that you give them nothing, they will think that my labour among you is in vain. They expect something from me also. I give them what I have and what I can: but is it possible for me to satisfy their necessity? Seeing that it is not possible, I speak to you as their ambassador. You have listened, you have applauded—thank God for it! . . . But, my brethren, your applause is only the leaves of the tree: it is fruit that is required" (*Sermo* 61. 12). Many other of Augustine's sermons contain similar appeals. Again, among the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus, is to be found a moving discourse "Concerning the love of the poor" (*Oratio* 14), which appears, from its contents, to have been delivered in the presence of a large company of lepers, and depicts in mournful melodious phrases the sorrows and sufferings of such as they, contrasting them with the luxury of the rich. In such utterances we have a lofty and truly Christian appeal to the best side of human nature. Unfortunately, the instincts of pity and unselfish generosity were not sufficiently developed in the average Christian to make it possible to meet the enormous needs of the time in reliance upon these alone. Some more effective stimulus was needed: and the most effective stimulus of all was to convince a congregation that not only would their alms benefit their brethren, but that they would benefit themselves. Thus the appeal to self-interest which we have noticed making its appearance in the Church writers of the third century became more marked in those of the fourth—in proportion as both the need was greater and the old enthusiasm waxed more faint. Charity is represented in the light of a good investment. God is a borrower who can be relied upon to pay a generous rate of interest. It does not need a very developed Christian sensibility to feel a jarring note in such an appeal as this of Augustine's, in which the Saviour is represented as saying to His disciple: "Thou hast found me a giver, make me quickly a debtor. Nay, I have said too little. . . . I would have thee an usurer. Thou givest me a little, I will give thee much. Thou givest me earthly things, I will give thee heavenly. Thou givest me temporal things, I will make return to thee of eternal things" (*Sermo* 123. 5). Or again (and untranslatably), "*Si amas illum* (*i.e. Dominum*) *eme illum ab illo*" (*Sermo* 42. 2).

The force of an appeal of this sort was obviously increased by the efficacy attributed to almsgiving as an atonement for sin. We have already noticed this doctrine in Cyprian. It was to undergo a great development in the fourth and fifth centuries. Augustine, for example, says: "The Christian's sacrifice consists in alms to the poor. For in this way God is made merciful to sin. . . . From those sins and offences without which life cannot be passed here, men are cleansed by almsgiving" (*ibid.*, 1). The same writer speaks of "alms and fasting" as adding "wings to prayer" (*Sermo* 206. 2). So, again, Ambrose writes: "Thou hast money: then redeem thy sins. The Lord is not venal, but thou art venal. Thou art held a captive by thy sins: redeem thyself by thy works, by thy money" (*De Elia et jejunio*, 20). Chrysostom even goes so far as to liken the relation between the sinner and his Judge to the hagglings of a fair. "To-day there is opened a market of mercy. . . . A marvellous fair is set forth. . . .

Now the purpose of a fair is to buy at a cheap price and sell at a dear. . . . It is God Who has set this fair before our eyes. Buy then righteousness for little that thou mayest sell it again for much in the time to come. . . . Here is righteousness sold cheaply indeed for a cheap crust of bread, for a cheap garment, for a cup of cold water. . . . If we lend to God, then He is our debtor. Which wouldst thou have Him to be, a debtor or a judge?" (*Hom. de Pœn.*, vii. 6). A little earlier in the same passage Chrysostom, using the same metaphor as Augustine, says: "Repentance cannot fly without the wings of alms-deeds." The danger of such modes of expression in leading men to believe that they could buy themselves off the punishment of their sins is only too clear. It is true that the great Fathers of the fourth century are alive to the danger and endeavour to guard against it. Augustine repeatedly insists that almsgiving is of no avail to secure remission of sin unless it be accompanied by amendment of life. It is, in any case, only the lighter sort of sins that can be atoned for. "For grave sins" (such as adultery), "daily alms do not avail to wash them away" (*Sermo* 9. 18). But the ordinary congregation refused to pay heed to these qualifications and distinctions: they found the main doctrine more comfortable without them. The elaborate machinery of the mediæval eschatology was rapidly advancing in construction: and the thought that the pains of Purgatory might be lightened and abbreviated by judicious payments in cash down was too alluring to be easily let go. Already in Augustine we find it definitely stated that alms can benefit the souls of the dead, " so that the Lord will deal more mercifully with them than their sins have deserved " (*Sermo* 172. 2). To such principles the writers of the fifth and sixth centuries give a very generous development, showing themselves at the same time much less guarded in their statements than their predecessors had been. Some of Salvian's teaching, for example, can only be regarded as lending support to the grossest popular misconceptions on the subject.

This tendency to regard the mere act of giving as excellent in itself had an unfortunate effect not only on the giver but also on the recipient. The poor were too often represented as mere *corpora vilia* upon which the soul-saving experiments of wealthy sinners might be conveniently made. The ancient world was already only too familiar with the evils arising out of an indiscriminate giving of doles: but these evils now became more pronounced and more widely distributed than ever. Among the crowds which we have seen besetting Chrysostom on his way to church were no doubt many highly pathetic and deserving cases: but equally there must have been many sturdy rogues and vagabonds whose " wounds and sores " were purely artificial, like the beggars who still infest the steps of Italian churches. A true Christian charity would have tried to discriminate between the two: but for this there was no time and probably not much inclination. Indeed, at the end of the sermon on almsgiving from which we have already quoted, Chrysostom positively deprecates any such inquiry into cases. "Let us therefore not neglect this duty: for we are chiefly assisting not the poor but ourselves (!), and we receive more than we give. . . . I say these things not absolutely but because many persons are over-officious with the needy, asking them their country and livelihood and means of subsistence, etc.: demanding a thousand informations as to their health. . . . This is bad enough in summer: but in the cold weather to show ourselves so harsh and inhuman a judge . . . does it not betray an excessive want of sympathy? . . . But now, seeing that [the Lord] has released us from such busybodying and has promised to give us a perfect reward, whether the recipients of our charity are bad or good, let us attend to our own interests" (*De Eleem. Sermo*, 5-6). The reader asks himself with astonishment: How can the essential immorality of such an attitude have escaped the notice of a Doctor and Father of the Church? Was the interest of the recipients' character of no account whatever? It is true that Chrysostom represents the unsympathetic attitude which he attacks as in itself inciting to dishonesty: but his indubitable knowledge of human nature should surely have shown him that an entirely unregulated bestowal of alms was open to graver objections still. We must remember, however, that the discourse in question was an improvization: and probably the saint's heart on this occasion somewhat ran away with his head. In any case, the reflection is perhaps rather on the congregation than on the preacher. Nor would it be fair to take Chrysostom's somewhat unguarded expressions as typical of the patristic attitude generally. St. Ambrose, for example, in his *De officiis*, points out the danger of giving to worthless persons. "Never," he confesses, "was the greed of beggars greater than it is now. . . . If anyone were to trust their tales too readily, he would quickly drain the funds which are intended to serve for the sustenance of the poor. Let there be method in our giving, so that the poor may not go away empty nor the sustenance of the needy be turned into the spoil of dishonesty. Let there be discrimination. . . . We ought not only to lend our ears to hear the voices of those who plead, but also our eyes to look into their needs. . . ." (ii. 16 *f.*). In practice, however, the vast scale on which charitable relief was carried out must have made such enquiry almost impossible.

When from almsgiving we pass to the wider question of the attitude of the fourth-century writers towards property generally, we are confronted with the same contrast which we have observed in the writers of an earlier period. A theoretic communism is set over against a recognition in practice of the rights of property. The explanation of this contrast lies in the fact that the Fathers regard private property, like slavery, as a result of man's fallen state. It is no part of the original Divine purpose for the world: but was brought into existence by human sin. St. Ambrose is perfectly explicit on this point. "[The philosophers]," he writes, "considered it consonant with justice that one should treat common, that is, public, property as public and private as private. But that is not even in accordance with nature, for nature has poured forth all things for all men in common. God has ordered all things to be produced, so that there should be a common provision for all. Nature therefore has produced a common right, but usurpation has made it private" (*De off.*, i. 28). The same writer says elsewhere in denunciation of the rich: "How far, ye rich, do ye stretch your mad desires? Shall ye alone dwell upon the earth? Why do ye cast forth your fellow-man and claim for yourselves the possession of nature? The earth has been created for all in common, rich and poor alike: why do ye claim for yourselves a sole right to the soil? Nature knows no rich, who brings all poor into the world. . . . Naked she brings them forth, naked are they received by the earth which bare them" (*De Nabuthe*, 1). The Greek Fathers display sentiments no less communistic. St. Basil, for example, says: "As though a man, having taken a seat in a theatre, were to crowd out those who come in afterwards, esteeming what was really ordained for the use of all to be his private property—such are the rich. For they first lay hold upon what is common and then pretend it is their own because they seized it first. For if every man took only what was necessary for the satisfaction of his own need, no one would be rich and no one would be poor" (*Hom. in Luc. xii. 8.* 7). So, too, Gregory of Nazianzus in an appeal for alms: "It is covetousness which has defaced the noble order of nature, introducing also law to support its sway. But do thou regard the first equality, not the later distinction—not the law of the conqueror, but that of the Creator" (*Oratio* 14. 26). It is one thing, however, to enunciate views of this sort: and quite another to recommend that property should be abolished. Many of those who think that in an ideal ordering of society it would have no part, would yet admit that, as a practical proposition, the existing social order must be recognized and maintained. We must not forget, either, that most of the statements which are available on this point are taken from sermons: and a sermon is usually the last place in the world in which we should expect to find a calm and scientific precision of statement. In commenting on the description given in Acts of the life of the earliest Church in Jerusalem, Chrysostom does not disguise his own abstract preference for a communistic ordering of society. "Let all sell all their possessions and put them into a common stock. . . . How much gold, think you, would be collected?" He calculates a million pounds weight of gold—"nay, perhaps twice or thrice as much." "And what is the number of the poor? I think not more than 50,000. To feed that number daily what abundance there would be! And if the food were taken in common, at a common table, there would be no need of great expenditure. But some will say, What shall we do when all the money is spent? Do you think that it ever could be spent? Would not the grace of God be ten thousand-fold as great? . . . Nay, shall we not make a heaven upon earth?" (*Hom. in Act. Ap.* 11. 3). Such a spectacle, he thinks, would convert the world. "What grace, think you, would there be? . . . What Gentile would be left? None, I think: we should so attract them all and draw them to us." At the same time he admits that his dream is utterly incapable of realization. He begins his description by remarking sarcastically: "Let us now for a while describe it in words and derive at least this pleasure from it, seeing that you have no mind for it in fact." Elsewhere, too, he himself acknowledges that there is nothing wrong in wealth in itself. "It is not wealth that is evil, but covetousness and the love of money. . . . The lover of money is the guardian, not the master of his possessions, the slave and not the lord" (*Hom. ad pop. Ant.* 2. 5.). Our Lord, he points out, did not *at once* bid the rich young man abandon his wealth, but only when he asked, "What lack I yet?"—and, even then, only "if" he "would be perfect." So, too, Augustine, commenting on Haggai ii. 8, argues (as against the Manichees who contended that all material things are evil) that "a thing which has been created both for the glory of the Creator and for the proving of the good and the punishment of the bad cannot rightly be condemned." Having enunciated various kinds of good works, he asks, "Who does these things?" "The merciful and good man." "What does he do them with?" "With gold and silver" (*Sermo* 50. 4, 5). Ambrose, explaining our Lord's words, "Woe to them that are rich," says to the same effect: "Although in abundance of money there are many enticements to sin, yet there are also many incentives to virtue. Notwithstanding that virtue requires no pecuniary backing and the contribution of the poor is more commended than the liberality of the rich, yet [our Lord] does not condemn those who have riches but only those who do not know how to use them. . . . It is not therefore wealth but the [wrong] state of mind (*affectus*) which is blamed" (*Expos. ev. sec. Luc.*, bk. v. 69). And again: " All poverty is not holy nor all riches blameworthy: but just as luxury makes riches infamous, so holiness makes poverty commendable" (*ibid.*, bk. viii. 13). Thus, from the practical point of view, the Fathers are content with demanding liberal almsgiving from the rich. It is along these lines that an approximation to the primordial ἰσονομία of Nature is to be sought. Their standard, however, in this matter is sufficiently exacting. Everything must be given away except what is actually necessary. Thus Augustine says: " Find out how much [God] has given thee and take of that which is enough: all other things which remain as superfluities are the necessaries of others. The superfluities of the rich are the necessaries of the poor. Thou possessest what belongs to others when thou possessest more than thou needest" (*Enarr. in Ps. cxlvii.* 12). Even a man's natural desire to provide for his children must be postponed to the claims of charity. " He who made you will himself feed you with the things which He has made and will feed your children too" (*Sermo* 9. 20). Further, if a communistic mode of existence must remain a mere dream so far as the mass of mankind were concerned, it could be and was realized in the monasteries. Here the ideal of the Primitive Church was an accomplished fact. Chrysostom says in his eleventh homily on Acts, already quoted: "The dwellers in monasteries live now just as the faithful did then. Did any of them ever die of hunger? Or was any of them ever unprovided with plenty of everything?" Such abnegation of property is the way of perfection. The imperfect Christian need only give away a part (if often the greater part) of his property. The perfect Christian will give all. This is clearly implied in Chrysostom's exegesis of our Lord's command to the rich young man. So Augustine says: "Let us therefore, brethren, abstain from the possession of private property: or from the love of it, if we may not from its possession" (*Enarr. in Ps. cxxxi.* 6). The former is the higher, the latter the lower, path.

The effect of a "twofold standard" of this sort was obviously to drive the cream of the Christian body into the monastic life. This result has been severely condemned by many critics, who have seen in the abstraction from the ordinary activities of life of the noblest characters of the age a principal cause of the collapse of ancient civilization. This criticism is not without weight: but it is likely that in the long run the gain far outweighed the loss. It would be absurd to imagine that because the monk retired from the world, he therefore ceased to influence the world. Indeed, the very completeness of the monk's self-abnegation enormously increased his power of moral influence.

The great prophets of righteousness in the age which we are considering were, in the majority of cases, monks of some sort. In the midst of a world that was perishing of its own corruption and of a Church which was growing more and more secularized, the forces of good needed to be concentrated. It was good that there should be in every region communities of consecrated men and women, each standing like a city set on a hill to testify to the fact that the Christian life is first and foremost a life of fellowship and brotherhood. Otherwise the very idea might have been lost for ever. Not less valuable was the emphasis which the monastic system laid upon the duty and dignity of labour. The contempt for the manual labourer was one of the worst vices of ancient society, and contributed quite as much as anything else to its ultimate dissolution. Not only did its economic life rest upon the essentially rotten foundation of slavery, but we have seen that in its later stages even "free" labour so-called was held in the grip of external force. In the monasteries, however, men worked not only because they had to, but because they believed that labour—even the most menial labour—was a necessary part of a life lived according to the Divine will. It must be admitted that the monastic movement did not grasp this great principle all at once. The fakir-like piety of the "saints of the desert" tended to scorn labour as part of that life of the world from which they had fled. But the Rule of Basil gave labour a place in the monk's life: and Western monasticism went still further in the same direction. It is well known that the obligation of labour formed a fundamental part of the Benedictine Rule: and again and again under the willing hands of the sons of Benedict the desert was made to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

This glorification of labour meant, ultimately, the driving of still another nail into the coffin of slavery. But an evil so widely extended and so deeply rooted was bound to die hard: nor can it be said that the Church showed any great anxiety to grapple boldly with the institution as such. Here, again, we must distinguish between the theories of the Fathers and their practical precepts. They are universally agreed that slavery, like private property, involves a departure from the Divine purpose for mankind and is the result of sin. St. Chrysostom makes this quite clear. "Should anyone ask," he says, "whence is slavery? and why has it found an entrance into human life? . . . I will tell you. It was covetousness that brought forth slavery, and extravagance, and insatiable greed. . . . The thing was the fruit of sin. . . . Then came wars and battles and took their prisoners" (*Hom. in Eph.* 22. 2). In his original state man had no need of being ministered to, but everyone attended to his own requirements and there was perfect ὁμοτιμία. "But when sin entered in, it outraged freedom and destroyed the worth bestowed by nature and introduced slavery" (*Hom. in Gen.* 29. 6). Similarly, Augustine writes in his *City of God:* "The prime cause of slavery is sin which lays man under the dominion of his fellows—a thing which" (the saint is careful to add) "does not happen save by the judgment of God, with whom is no unrighteousness. . . . By nature, as God first created us, no one is the slave either of men or of sin" (*De civ. Dei*, xix. 15). On the other hand, slavery, having established itself, must be recognized as part of the existing order of things. The passage from Augustine, just quoted, goes on: "This servitude is penal and is appointed by the law which orders the natural order to be preserved and forbids its disturbance." The slave must therefore put up with his position. Chrysostom, again, inveighs against the ostentation which caused the rich to move about surrounded by troops of slaves, as though the very touch of the vulgar herd brought defilement: but he does not urge his hearers to do without slaves altogether, but only to limit their number. He admits, certainly, that slaves are unnecessary. "To this end God has given us hands and feet that we might not stand in need of slaves. For not on account of need was the class of slaves introduced, else had a slave been created along with Adam: but it is the penalty of sin and the punishment of disobedience. . . . So that it is not necessary to have a slave." He adds, however: "Or if it be at all necessary, let it be about one only or at the most two" (*Hom. in* 1 *Cor.* 40. 5). Clearly there is no condemnation here of slave-owning in itself. It is true that Chrysostom goes on to urge his hearers to set their superfluous slaves at liberty. "I bid thee occupy none of them in ministering to thyself, but when thou hast purchased them and hast taught them trades whereby to support themselves, let them go free." The context, however, shows that the suggestion is only made satirically, as an answer to those who would plead that they collected large numbers of slaves "for humanity's sake." If *humanity* be your object, replies the preacher, then you had best end their slavery altogether. The Church certainly spoke with approval of manumission. But it in no wise represented it as a duty. Indeed, the monasteries were great slave-owners and were even more than ordinarily unwilling to set their slaves at liberty. By a canon of the Council of Agde (506), an abbot was, in fact, definitely forbidden to do so. On the other hand, preachers were constant in their admonitions to masters to treat their slaves with kindness and consideration. There seems, indeed, to have been only too much need for such exhortations, even among Christian folk. St. Chrysostom gives a truly horrifying picture of a mistress stripping her slave-girl naked, tying her to the bed and whipping her—and that, too, in her husband's presence—while the narrow street re-echoes with the victim's shrieks (*Hom. in Eph.* 15. 3). "Ought these things," asks the preacher, "to take place in the houses of Christians?" We can only hope, for the credit of Christianity, that they did not take place very often. If the slave's duty is to obey (and this is clearly laid down in the case of a bad, no less than of a good master),[57] yet the master, too, has his responsibility. Thus Chrysostom bids masters to be "kind and forgiving, as yourselves being servants" (*ibid.* 22. 2). Augustine, too, in his *City of God*, expresses the following noble conception of a master's duty: " Those who are true fathers of households take thought for all members of their household as much as for their own children, that they may worship and win God and may come to that heavenly home in which the duty of ruling men is no longer necessary, because the duty of caring for their everlasting happiness has also ceased; but until they reach that home, masters ought to feel their authority a greater burden than servants their service" (xix. 16). To this from Aristotle's ἔμψυχον ὄργανον is a far cry. It may be (and often is) urged by the opponents of Christianity that the Church would have done better if, instead of trying to render slavery more tolerable for the slave, it had addressed its efforts to abolishing it altogether. Rightly or wrongly, however, the Church did not so conceive its duty: and, indeed, its critics seem to ignore the appalling disorganization, and suffering to the slaves themselves, which would have been involved by such a forcible tearing-up of the very foundations of social life. Gradually in the lapse of centuries the economic conditions of European society were transformed: and slavery, ceasing to be regarded as necessary or even profitable, ceased also to exist. But if the causes of its ultimate disappearance were largely utilitarian, it would be untrue to represent them as wholly so. A moral revolution had been marching slowly side-by-side with the economic: and the ideas which guided the former were the direct outcome of the Christian conception of human life.

As regards war and the military profession, the passing of the supreme authority in the State into hands that were at least nominally Christian inevitably brought about a change of attitude. Nor could it have been easy to forget that the triumph of Christianity had been due to the prowess of a military conqueror. Augustine was the friend of not a few eminent soldiers and shows his respect for their profession. The fact that the detested Manichæans condemned war as wrong in itself would hardly tend to make him dislike it more. In his polemical treatise against that sect he condemns the view that all war is unjust. Force is often necessary to prevent evil: and " good men " are often " compelled by right conduct " to wage war from this motive. Our Lord's teaching on non-resistance is carefully minimised (bk. xxii. 74 *f*). A similar line is taken in a letter (138) to Marcellinus. In another letter (189) to Count Bonifacius he develops the idea that " the object of war is the restoration of peace." Views eminently reasonable no doubt—yet not without danger. Are we not already on the slippery descent which was to lead Augustine himself later to condone the forcible suppression of the Donatists and, ultimately, the Middle Ages to the whole ghastly machinery of " religious " war and Inquisition?

CHAPTER III

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

THE change in the conditions of Church life produced by the Constantinian settlement was nowhere more clearly apparent than in the sphere of charitable relief. Henceforth the Church's charity exhibited a vast development in extent side-by-side with a growing deterioration of method. Both of these characteristics were the immediate result of the great increase in the size of the churches. As the number of Christians grew larger there were at the same time more rich to give and more poor to receive. It is quite certain that the increase in the amount given in alms was by no means in proportion either to the number or the wealth of the new adherents: but (as we have seen) the native parsimony of rich Christians was in some measure overcome by appeals to their self-interest. As to the recipients of charity, the terrible necessities of the time must have co-operated with the very human propensity to what, in India, is called "rice-Christianity," to increase enormously the number of these. We know that at Antioch, in St. Chrysostom's time, 3,000 widows and virgins alone were in receipt of church relief:[58] and that the same saint, when Bishop of Constantinople, fed daily 7,000 persons.[59] Such charity was princely indeed; but it could hardly help being very indiscriminate. With such a multitude of persons to support, inquiry into and personal attention for individual cases were virtually impossible. The churches, in fact, had become so large that the individual was lost in the crowd. In former days the welfare of each member of a church had been felt to be the personal responsibility of all his fellow-members. The sense of brotherhood and mutual dependence was strongly developed. But this sense inevitably waned just in proportion as the churches became larger. It is obviously more possible to feel "brotherly" towards 100 persons than it is towards 1,000; while, if 100,000 are in question, the imagination of the ordinary man is entirely insufficient to allow him to feel "brotherly" at all. Further, the effect of persecution being always to quicken and strengthen corporate feeling, its cessation inevitably means a corresponding loss in this direction. Thus the conditions were entirely changed. The rich continued to give: but no longer from the same motive. The distressed were for them unfortunate human beings, rather than brethren and guild-mates who had fallen on hard times. Often it is to be feared that they were not even that: but that their relief was a mere means towards avoiding unpleasant consequences for the giver in the world to come. The poor, too, continued to receive: but each one felt himself more and more to be a mere cipher in an eleemosynary crowd, struggling to obtain a dole which had nothing in the least individual about it. This decline in the "congregational" character that had marked the earlier charity of the Church might perhaps have been obviated to some extent by the subdivision of churches into smaller units. But everywhere there was great unwillingness to diminish the power and prestige of the mother-church in this way. Even the country churches were kept in strict dependence on the church of the neighbouring city, especially in regard to property. They were (to use a modern parallel) mission churches, not independent parishes. A significant feature of this period is the final extinction of the Agapæ.[60] These, indeed, seem to have continued to exist throughout the greater part of the fourth century, their eleemosynary character becoming increasingly marked. But the growing secularization of Church life opened the door to grave abuses: and *circa* 353 the Synod of Gangra had to issue grave warnings on the subject. In their final phase they assumed almost exclusively the character of funeral-feasts and martyr-commemorations, and it would appear that many of the evils which marked the pagan *Parentalia* reproduced themselves in connection with them. Both Gregory of Nazianzus and Chrysostom comment unfavourably upon them: and the Council of Laodicea (364) forbade them to be held in churches. St. Ambrose prohibited their observance at Milan: and in Africa St. Augustine used his vast influence to discourage them. By the end of the fourth century they were extinct in most parts of the Western Church: though the institution seems to have lasted somewhat longer in the East.

The administration of charitable funds was concentrated more exclusively than ever in the hands of the bishop. Lists (called *matricula*) were kept of those who received relief. The deacons continued to act as the bishop's assistants: but this side of their office was more and more eclipsed by their liturgical functions. In order to facilitate the organization and distribution of relief, the larger cities were divided into districts, for each of which a deacon was made responsible. At Rome and certain other places the number of deacons was fixed at seven, in imitation of that of their (supposed) prototypes at Jerusalem. Usually, however, the deacons were much more numerous. In the East there were also deaconesses: but a comparison of the *Didascalia* with the *Apostolic Constitutions* seems to indicate that, in the course of the fourth century, their importance declined. "We feel instinctively," says Dean Armitage Robinson, "that the deaconess has dropped. She is indeed first among the women of the Church: but readers and door-keepers have got in front of her. . . . The deacon is the servant of the bishop, the deaconess is the servant of the deacon."[61] In the West there is no trace of deaconesses until quite the end of the fourth century: and when at length they make their appearance, it is strictly and repeatedly forbidden to ordain them.[62]

The funds available for distribution continued to be supplied in large measure by the alms of the faithful, though the oblations gradually dwindled, and after the end of the fifth century ceased altogether to be applied to the relief of the poor and were used exclusively for the support of the clergy.

In addition to the church collections, splendid gifts were made by the wealthy and devout on an incomparably greater scale than ever before. In this connection we may note the effect of the wave of ascetic enthusiasm which, towards the end of the fourth century and under the influence of the imperious personality of Jerome, swept over a section of the aristocracy of the West. Its influence was mostly felt by women, though men also bowed before it. It is impossible not to admire the disinterested love and zeal which led these rich and high-born personages to give up all that they possessed, in order to serve God in a life of poverty and devotion, even though a critical eye cannot help detecting in their piety a somewhat hectic tinge. It does not come within the scope of the present work to give a detailed account of the more prominent representatives of this remarkable movement. The best known is probably Paula, a descendant of the Scipios and Gracchi, who, with her daughter Eustochium, went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and settled permanently in the neighbourhood of Jerome at Bethlehem. Another daughter was Blæsilla, whose early death almost occasioned a riot in Rome. It was said that "she was killed by fasting," and that "the monks ought to be driven out of the city." Paula had also a third daughter who was married to a senator called Pammachius: husband and wife were equally devoted to good works. Other members of the same circle were Marcella, Fabiola, the foundress of the first hospital in the West, and the elder and younger Melania, both of whom settled at Jerusalem. But perhaps the most prominent figure of the whole movement was Paulinus, an enormously rich senator of Aquitane and a friend of St. Martin and St. Ambrose, who, under their influence, handed over the greater part of his possessions to the Church and the poor, and settled with his wife Therasia at Nola in Campania, where he became Bishop and one of the foremost spiritual influences of the time. The Church of the East produced a similar group of aristocratic *dévotes*—notably Olympias, the friend and deaconess of Chrysostom at Constantinople, and the sister of St. Basil, Macrina. The Church must obviously have benefited largely by the self-renunciation of persons so wealthy as these.

Other sources of supply, however, had by this time become available besides the free-will offerings of Christian folk. The State showed itself willing to assist. Constantine gave to the Church part of the corn-contributions for the support of its ministers, including widows and virgins.[63] But far more important was the extensive landed property which was now rapidly accumulating in the hands of the Church. The growth of this was much facilitated by the permission given to the Church by Constantine (321) to receive testamentary bequests.[64] The terrors of rich sinners in the prospect of death were skilfully worked upon by ecclesiastics in order to elicit such bequests: and Jerome gives a very painful picture of the legacy-hunting by clerics and monks which prevailed in his time. "I hear also," he writes to Nepotianus, "of servile attention shown by some towards old men and women when these are childless. They fetch the basin, beset the bed and perform with their own hands the most revolting offices. . . . If, for a little while, the old fellow shows signs of returning vigour they are in agonies . . ." (*Ep.* 52. 6). This legacy-hunting assumed such scandalous proportions that Valentinian had to restrain it by legal enactment (370).[65] We may note here that Augustine declined to receive gifts of this sort when they involved the disinheriting of the testator's children: but all churchmen were not equally scrupulous. The estates of the Church were further swelled by its receiving in many cases the reversion of the temple-lands. The usefulness of the real property thus acquired in founding a regular source of income independent of the fluctuations of alms and gifts needs no emphasis: but Chrysostom complains bitterly of the inroads which the management of it made upon the time of the clergy, diverting their minds and energies from the spiritual duties proper to their profession. He lays the blame on the niggardliness of church-people, which had made it necessary to resort to this means of supplying the Church's requirements. " Now," he complains, " there are fields and houses and hiring of dwellings and carriages and muleteers and mules and a great array of such-like gear in the Church because of you and your hardness of heart. For the store of the Church ought to be in you, and your zeal ought to be a revenue to her: but now two unseemly things come to pass: both you remain unfruitful and God's priests do not attend to their proper duties. Was it not possible for the houses and lands to have remained in the hands of the Apostles? Wherefore then did they sell them and give them away? Because this was a better course. But now a fear seized our fathers (seeing that you were so mad after earthly things) that the companies of the widows, etc., should perish of famine: therefore were they constrained to secure these things. For it was not their wish to thrust themselves into what was so unbecoming: but they would have preferred that your good-will should become a supply to them, and that they themselves should give heed to prayers only. But now ye have forced them to imitate the houses of those that transact public affairs: whereby all things are turned upside down. . . . When our bishops ought to be careful and thoughtful about your souls they are worrying themselves every day about things which are the concern of innkeepers and tax-gatherers and accountants and stewards" (*Hom. in Matt.* 85. 3 *f.*). For good or ill, however, the accumulation of estates by the Church continued: and even in the fifth century it ranked already as the greatest landowner of the Empire.

The Church's wealth in movable property also must have been very great. The churches were built and adorned in the most sumptuous manner: and gorgeous gifts were made to them in the shape of vestments and gold and silver plate. Be it said to the Church's credit, however, that there was little hesitation about selling such things, if the necessities of charity required. Ambrose thus defends himself against the criticism levelled at him by the Arians because he had sold Church plate in order to ransom captives taken by the Goths: "Although we do not act thus without good reason, yet we have followed it up among the people so as to confess and to add again and again that it was far better to preserve souls than gold for the Lord. . . . The Church has gold, not to store up, but to lay out and to spend on those who need. . . . Is it not much better that the priests should melt it down for the sustenance of the poor, if other supplies fail, than that a sacrilegious enemy should carry it off and defile it? Would not the Lord Himself say: 'Why didst thou suffer so many needy to die of hunger? Surely thou hadst gold. Thou shouldst have given them sustenance. Why are so many captives bought in the slave-market? and why are so many unredeemed left to be slain by the enemy? It had been better to present living vessels than gold ones. . . . How beautifully it is said when long lines of captives are redeemed by the Church: These Christ hath redeemed. Behold the gold that can be tried, the useful gold; behold the gold of Christ which frees from death; behold the gold whereby modesty is redeemed and chastity is preserved" (*De off.*, ii. 28).

The Church was more successful in amassing property than in securing a recognition of the principle of tithe. This failure was not for want of teaching on the subject: but the lesson was not easy to make effective. No doubt private individuals would fulfil the obligation on their own account: but it was not until the period of Frankish domination in Gaul that any compulsion came to be applied.

A most important feature of Christian beneficence in this period is the rise of charitable institutions. It is now that, for the first time in the history not only of the Church but of mankind, hospitals (in the modern sense of the word) make their appearance. In earlier times sick members of the Church had been visited and tended in their own homes. But this was no longer possible in view of the vast number of cases needing help: and the expedient was adopted of getting together a large number of sick and needy persons under one roof. It is impossible to fix exactly the date at which the first hospitals were founded. In their earliest form they would appear to have been less "hospitals" than "hospices"—houses for the reception of travellers, particularly in lonely spots far from the haunts of men. As such, they are proved by the *Acta Archelai* (ch. 4) to have existed at the beginning of the fourth century. As such, too, they must have been a recognized institution by the time of Julian: for that Emperor, in his attempt to galvanize a senile paganism into new life and to make it an effective rival of Christianity, ordered the foundation of *xenodochia*, in imitation of those existing among the Christians.[66] It was not till the last third of the fourth century, however, that the institution became general. St. Basil founded a hospital (in the modern sense), called after him the Basilias, *circa* 370: and a description of it is given by his friend Gregory of Nazianzus in his thirtieth oration, "*in laudem Basilii*." The example thus set was widely followed. There was a hospital at Antioch at the time that Chrysostom was preaching there:[67] and later the same saint himself founded two *nosocomia* at Constantinople.[68] The first hospital in the West was founded in Rome by Fabiola, already mentioned as one of the devout women of Jerome's circle. It was a house for the sick. Soon afterwards a member of the same circle, Pammachius, founded a house for strangers at Portus. Paulinus also built and endowed a hospital at Nola. The institution, however, does not appear to have spread very rapidly in the West. When a private individual founded a hospital, he usually endowed it with property for its support. In other cases, the cost of upkeep was met from the Church funds. The State, too, seems to have helped at first: but after the time of Valentinian such assistance ceased. All hospitals, whether founded by the Church or by private individuals, were under the exclusive control of the bishop. Their inmates were not sick persons only, but included the needy and homeless of all kinds. Even when their name seems to denote that they were intended to meet a certain class of need (*e.g. orphanotrophia*, *gerontotrophia*), the giving of other kinds of assistance as well does not appear to have been precluded. But no doubt, as time went on, it would be found convenient to have a separate institution for each class of cases. Frequently hospitals were combined with monasteries: and in this case the monks would frequently undertake the care of the inmates. Even when a monastery had no hospital attached to it, it was bound to be the centre of a wide spreading beneficence. Hospitality was ever a monastic virtue: and the religious houses would be especially useful in so far as they provided a refuge for the people of the countryside in time of invasion. The attendants in hospitals were regarded as belonging to the clerical order, but to its lowest rank. Such were the notorious *parabolani* who played so leading and so sinister a part in the Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. Their role as a sort of episcopal bravos led to their numbers being limited by law.

The great wealth administered by the bishop, combined with the means of influence which are always at the disposal of one who directs charitable effort on a large scale, would have sufficed in any case to render him a very important personage indeed. His power was further increased by important privileges that were conferred upon him by the State. It is true that (as Dr. Bigg remarks) "the great ecclesiastics were never generally admitted to the Councils of the Emperor. They were shut out from all imperial responsibility and from all chance of gathering political wisdom. They were relegated (not entirely against their own will) to the domain of theology and ethics: and this sharp division between secular and spiritual produced very unfortunate results both in State and Church."[69] On the other hand, they were put in possession of a wide and very real "prerogative of mercy." The bishop was endowed by law with the right of "intercession" as the natural champion of the unfortunate and oppressed. The letters of the great churchmen of the time abound in illustrations of such intervention on behalf of sufferers from wrongs of all sorts. Basil, for example, repeatedly intercedes on behalf of victims of the extortion of the imperial tax-gatherers.[70] This right of intercession applied especially to condemned criminals—and particularly those condemned to death. The visitation of the local prison was entrusted to the bishop (*v. infra*): and it was his duty to interest himself in the fate of those confined there. Often he was able to secure the remission or at least the mitigation of an exorbitant sentence. A closely connected privilege was the Church's right of "asylum"—transferred to it from the heathen temples. Anyone who sought shelter from pursuit within the precincts of a church was safe—at least, for the time being. It is obvious that a privilege of this sort was very liable to abuse: and it was necessary to take precautions to prevent it from being taken advantage of by criminals fleeing from justice or debtors anxious to escape their creditors. But in times of lawlessness or popular tumult it must often have been of very great value. At least it allowed time for passion to cool down and for the Church to exercise its office of mediator. The State also recognized the episcopal jurisdiction which, from very early times, had been resorted to by the Christians themselves in their internal disputes. This jurisdiction (which was compulsory in the case of the clergy) might be appealed to by laymen too if the parties so desired. A scope was thus given for the play of equitable considerations that was scarcely possible in an ordinary court of law. We must not forget either that the Church could and did employ the weapons of its own ecclesiastical discipline to bring powerful wrongdoers to their senses: and, further, that such weapons at that time had a very real power to hurt. The classic illustration of this is, of course, the action of the great Ambrose, who did not hesitate to excommunicate even the mighty Emperor Theodosius himself on account of his atrocious massacre of an unarmed and innocent multitude at Thessalonica. It is difficult to say which of the two emerged from the incident with the greater credit—the bishop who inflicted, or the Emperor who submitted to, the sentence. Even a modern French anti-clerical might hesitate to condemn an "ecclesiastical pretension" of this sort.

No doubt, over against such an example of lofty courage and of an authority moral in the highest sense of the word, there might easily be set many cases of miserable subservience on the part of the Church's chief ministers to the secular power. It is obvious, too, that even when the authority of the bishop was well used, the spectacle of a great and autocratic prelate dispensing a lordly charity *de haut en bas* to all comers is a very different thing from the beautiful picture of brotherhood and mutual helpfulness displayed by the Primitive Church. But the logic of facts is inexorable: and the circumstances of the later were very different from those of the earlier period. It is indubitable that, whether exerted in a better or a worse way, the Church's social action was still beneficent in the highest degree. If imitation be the sincerest form of flattery, the Church can desire no better testimonial than the policy of the Emperor Julian.

Julian hated Christianity with a bitter hatred: but he could find no better way of overthrowing it than by helping (or forcing) paganism to rival its charity. From this point of view his famous letter to Arsacius will always remain as one of the most curious documents in history.

It only remains to indicate, in conclusion, a few of the more important directions in which the charity of the Church displayed itself:

(1) *Widows and orphans.*—The care and support of *widows* continued to be recognized as a first charge on the Church's funds, as in earlier days. In certain parts of the Church, the institution of "widows-president" gave the widows a place among the ranks of the clergy.[71] It was apparently not unusual to commit the property of widows to the custody of the Church. Thus Ambrose says: "Great care must be taken that property entrusted by widows remains inviolate" (*De off.*, ii. 29): and we are told that one of the causes of the hostility of the Empress Eudoxia towards Chrysostom was the resistance he offered to an attempt by her to effect a compulsory purchase of a vineyard belonging to certain poor widows.[72] For the reception of *orphans*, institutions were provided by the Church or by private individuals called *orphantrophia* or *brephotrophia*. In this connection we may notice the responsibility assumed by the Christian body in regard to *foundlings*. The number of these was always very large in ancient times, owing to the abominable custom of exposing such newly born infants as their fathers did not think fit to have reared. Nothing is more

symptomatic of the deep callousness of feeling which disfigured the world of antiquity than this practice, which was generally acquiesced in by public opinion. It is true that, at least in the days of the Empire, the law punished the slaying of new-born children outright. But (as Mr. Lecky says) "a broad distinction was popularly drawn between infanticide and exposition. The latter, though probably condemned, was certainly not punished by law: it was practised on a gigantic scale and with absolute impunity, noticed by writers with the most frigid indifference and, at least in the case of destitute parents, considered a most venial offence."[73] Even when the exposed child survived, it was in most cases only to incur the more horrible fate of being sold as a slave or (in the case of females) of being brought up as a prostitute. In no direction did the Christianization of the Empire produce more admirable results than in mitigating the fate of these unfortunate beings. The care of foundlings was by law transferred to the Church: and those children who were not adopted by private individuals were brought up at its expense—presumably in institutions. Not content with caring for the victims of the evil, Christianity also attacked boldly the evil itself. Measures were taken by Constantine to safeguard the interests of exposed children in after-life: and at length Valentinian not only, by a law of 374, made infanticide a capital offence, but also decreed the punishment of child-exposure.

(2) *Prisoners and slaves.*—With the cessation of persecution, the care of *prisoners* no longer possessed

the same poignant interest for Christians as in the days when their brethren were languishing in gaol or in the mines for the sake of the Faith. The prisons of the Empire still held the victims of religious persecution: but it was a Christian Emperor who had put them there—whether for heresy or for an obstinate attachment to the old pagan worship. The duty, however, of caring for the bodily and spiritual welfare of condemned criminals was not forgotten by the Church. A decree of Honorius and Theodosius (409) charges Christian bishops with the responsibility of seeing that prisoners are humanely treated—and especially that they are properly fed and washed—*ne his humanitas clausis per corruptos carcerum custodes negetur.*[74]

The attitude of the Fathers towards slavery has been already discussed. We have seen that there was no idea of seeking to abolish the institution: but that at the same time everything was done to persuade masters to treat their slaves kindly. Manumission was never regarded as a duty: yet it is certain that it often took place, and by being performed in church acquired a sort of religious consecration. It was not uncommon for those who entered upon a monastic life to set their slaves at liberty. Thus, too, Melania set at liberty all her slaves—8,000, according to Palladius (*Hist. Laus.*, ch. 61)—when she left Rome.

A striking triumph for the Christian spirit was the final abolition of *gladiatorial shows* during this period. These monstrous exhibitions—like infanticide and the exposure of children—had always revolted the Christian conscience, with its intense conviction of the sacredness of the individual human life: and Church writers had ceaselessly declaimed against them. But it was not till the heroic monk Telemachus flung himself in protest into the Roman arena and sealed his testimony with his life-blood that the public conscience was aroused and the darkest stain on ancient civilization was removed.

The Church's influence was also seen in a more kindly treatment of *prostitutes*. It is curious, however, that both Augustine and Salvian defend the institution—at least, as an alternative to worse evils: nor was it till the reign of Justinian that the first home for fallen women was founded.

(3) *The ransom of captives.*—The barbarian invasions, sweeping with increasing frequency across the provinces of the Empire, often involved the carrying off of a large number of the civilian population, who were held to ransom by their captors, and, failing ransom, were sold into slavery. It was regarded as a primary Christian duty to redeem them. St. Ambrose goes so far as to say that " the highest kind of liberality is to redeem captives, to save them from the hands of their enemies, to snatch men from death and, most of all, women from shame, to restore children to their parents and parents to their children, and to give back a citizen to his country " (*De off.*, ii. 15). The saint practised his own precept: for when, after the defeat and death of Valens at Hadrianople in 378, the Goths ravaged Thrace and Illyria and carried away a vast number of captives whom they sold as slaves, Ambrose redeemed all he could,

even selling the church plate for the purpose. We have already seen how he answered the Arians who accused him of sacrilege. So, too, Paulinus of Nola gave the whole of his remaining property to rescue the prisoners whom the Vandals were carrying off into Africa. Gregory the Great even says that he sold himself as a slave for the purpose: but this is certainly untrue.[75] We are also told that Candidus, Bishop of Sergiopolis, redeemed 12,000 prisoners for 14,400 solidi. But the most striking case of all (because in this case the ransomed were neither fellow-countrymen nor probably fellow-Christians) is one recorded by Socrates in his *Ecclesiastical History* (vii. 21). The story may be told in the historian's own words:

"A noble action of Acacius, Bishop of Amida at that time, greatly enhanced his reputation among all men. As the Roman soldiery would on no account return to the Persian King the captives whom they had taken in devastating Azarene, these captives (about 7,000 in number) were being destroyed by famine, and this greatly distressed the King of the Persians. Acacius thought that such a matter was by no means to be overlooked: so, having assembled his clergy, he thus addressed them: 'Our God, my brethren, needs neither dishes nor cups: for he neither eats nor drinks, seeing that he is not in want of anything. Since, then, through the generosity of its members, the church possesses many vessels both of gold and silver, it behoves us with the proceeds of these to redeem the prisoners and also supply them with food.' Having said these things and many others of like sort, he had the vessels melted down: and having paid the soldiers a ransom for their captives and given these latter food, he furnished them with what was needful for their journey and sent them back to their own King."

With so admirable an example of disinterested charity the author is well content to close his book.

NOTES

[1] What follows is based on Bousset, *Die Religion des Judenthums*, 245 *f.* [2] Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, i. 79. [3] Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (Eng. tr.), 92. [4] T. R. Glover, *Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire*, 137. [5] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 63. [6] Aug., *Ep. ad Macedonium*, 145. [7] In Xen. *Mem.*, ii. 3. 18. [8] Aristotle, *Nicom. Eth.*, viii. 11. [9] See Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, 192 *f.*; also Lecky, *Hist. of European Morals*, ii. 76 *f.* [10] Dill, *op. cit.*, bk. ii., ch. 3. [11] Waltzing, *Les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains*, i. 304 *f.* *Cf.* Boissier, *La réligion romaine*, ii. 333 *f.* [12] On what follows see Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church*, i. 52 *f.* [13] See Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28. [14] Sanday and Headlam, note *ad loc.* [15] Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, 212. Harnack, *Constitution and Law of the Church*, 57-9, appears to take a similar view. [16] Hort, *op. cit.*, 207-8. [17] See *ibid.*, 198 *f.* [18] So Bp. Lightfoot understands γυναῖκας in 1 Tim. iii. 11, not (as some) as referring to deacons' wives. Hort (*op. cit.*, 198) takes the same view. Harnack (*op. cit.*, 68) regards the meaning as doubtful. [19] Hort, *op. cit.*, 199. [20] See Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen.* [21] Lightfoot, *Colossians*, p. 216 (on Col. i. 16). [22] Robinson, *Ephesians*, 43. [23] Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, 142. [24] McGiffert, *Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, 378. [25] Gore, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 127. [26] See Robinson, *Ephesians*, 41 *f.* [27] *Ibid.*, 93. [28] Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 367. [29] Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, iv. 293. [30] Originally set forth in *Expositor*, July, 1907. Dr. Moulton adheres to this view in Peake, *Commentary on the Bible*, p. 907. [31] Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, 219 *f.* [32] See *e.g. Ign. Smyrn.*, 6. 2. [33] Westcott, *Epistles of S. John*, note *ad loc.* [34] On what follows, see Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, 372 *f.* [35] Lucian,

De morte Peregrini, 13. [36] Archbishop Benson, *Cyprian*, 249. [37] *E.g.* Clem. Alex., *Pæd.*, iii. 10. *Cf.* also *Didascalia*, iv. 2. [38] For a fuller treatment of this subject see Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, ii. 41 *ff.* [39] Harnack, *ibid.*, i., bk. ii., ch. 4. My indebtedness to Harnack throughout this chapter is obvious. [40] C. H. Turner in *Ministry of Women*, 89. [41] For some account of these see Dean Armitage Robinson's essay in *Ministry of Women*, 64 *f.*; also Bp. Collins's article on "Apostolical Constitutions" in *Encycl. Brit.* The edition here used is that of Funk, in which the Latin version of the *Didascalia* is printed opposite to the Greek text of the *Apost. Const.* The references are to the *Didascalia*, as being the earlier document. [42] Eus., *H.E.*, vi. 2. [43] See *Apostolic Church Ordinance*, 21 (in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, ii. 5). [44] The story is told by Ambrose in *De off.*, ii. 28. [45] Here and elsewhere I have made use of the admirable translation of Lucian by H. W. and J. G. Fowler (Oxford, 1905). [46] On these *collegia* see Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, 430. [47] Eus., *H.E.*, vii. 5. [48] See Basil, *Ep. ad Dam. papam.*, 70. [49] Eus., *H.E.*, vii. 22. [50] Uhlhorn, *op. cit*, 137. [51] Pater, *op. cit.*, ii. 137. [52] Eus. *H.E.*, vi. 43. [53] For further information concerning the Agapæ see Keating, *The Agape and the Eucharist*, ch. ii., iii., iv. [54] Tertullian, *De præscr.*, 30. [55] Summary quoted from Turner, *op. cit.*, 97. [56] Chrys., *Hom. in Matt.* 85. 4 (Migne lviii. 763). [57] Chrys., *Hom. in Eph.*, 22. 1; Aug., *Enarr. in Ps.* cxxiv. 7. [58] Chrys., *Hom. in Matt.* 66. 3. (Migne, lviii. 630). [59] Palladius, *Vita Chrys.*, ch. 5 (Migne, xlvii. 20). [60] See again Keating, *op. cit.*, 145 *f.* [61] *The Ministry of Women*, 67. [62] See Bp. Collins' essay in *ibid.* 121 *f.* [63] Theodoret, *H.E.*, i. 10. [64] Cod. Theod., xvi. 2. 4 (ed. Mommsen and Meyer, i. 836). [65] Cod. Theod., xvi. 2. 20 (*ibid.* i. 841). [66] Sozomen, *H.E.*, v. 16. [67] Chrys., *Hom. in Matt.*, 66. 3 (Migne lviii. 630). [68] Palladius, *Vita Chrysostomi*, 5 (Migne, xlvii. 20). [69] Bigg, *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, 123. [70] *E.g. Epp.*, 85, 36, 37, 76, etc. [71] See *Ministry of Women*, 77. [72] Baronius, *Ann. ad ann.*, 401, v. 142 (quoted by Uhlhorn, 419). [73] Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii. 27-8. [74] Cod. Theod., ix. 3. 7 (ed. M. and M., i. 442). [75] See Greg. M., *Dialogues*, iii. 1.

INDEX

ACTA ARCHELAI, 166
Agape, 22, 32, 119, 159
Alimentationes, 14
Almsgiving, 29 *f.*, 80 *ff.*, 138 *ff.*; as atonement for sin, 89, 141
Ambrose, 141 *ff.*, 159, 164, 170 *f.*, 174
Apocalyptic writers, 2
Apostolical Church Order, 123
Apostolical Constitutions, 118, 160
Aristides, 95, 100, 104, 108, 110
Aristotle, 9
Asylum, right of, 169
Augustine, 8, 127, 139 *ff.*, 163

Barnabas, 21; Epistle of, 80
Basil, 146, 151, 166, 168
Bishops, administration of charity by, 122, 168; right of intercession, 168; jurisdiction of, 169
Burial of dead, 108

Captives, ransom of, 174
Chrysostom, 136, 138 *ff.*, 157, 159, 163, 166, 171
Clement, Epistle of, 78 *f.*, 102, 107, 109; 2nd Epistle, 89
Clement of Alexandria, 85 *f.*, 101
Collegia, 14, 108, 117
Communism, 20, 25, 82, 145 *f.*
Constantine, 128, 134, 135 *f.*, 162, 172
Corbona, 90, 118
Corinth, 28 *f.*, 32 *f.*, 78
Council of Elvira, 95; Agde, 154; Gangra, 159; Laodicea, 159
Curiales, 131
Cyprian, 88 *f.*, 103, 110, 112, 120, 122

Deaconesses, 36, 38, 123, 160
Deacons, 23, 36, 38, 122 *f.*, 160
Didache, 81, 104, 111
Didascalia, 100, 107 *f.*, 120, 123, 160
Double standard, 91, 150

Ephesians, Epistle to, 41 *ff.*
Epictetus, 11, 12
Episcopoi, 36, 38, 122
Essenes, 24
Eusebius, 102, 105, 106 *f.*, 112, 115

Foundlings, 171

Gladiatorial shows, 173
Gnostics, 72, 82
Gregory of Nazianzus, 140, 146, 159, 166

Hebrews, Epistle to, 71
Hermas, 67 *f.*, 80 *ff.*, 95, 100, 109 *f.*, 120 *f.*
Hippolytus, 107
Hospitality, 31, 38, 71, 79, 109

Hospitals, 14, 166 *f.*
"Humanity," 12, 43, 45

Ignatius, 77, 80, 94, 111
Irenæus, 121

James, Epistle of St., 67 *f.*
Jerome, 161, 162
Jerusalem, Church at, its social organization, 19 *f.*; "poor saints" of, 20, 25, 31
Jesus Christ, social teaching of, 3 *f.*
John, Epistles of St., 72 *f.*
Julian, Emperor, 166, 170
Justin Martyr, 81 *f.*, 110

Kingdom of God, 1 *ff.*, 58, 60

Labour, dignity of, 93, 151
Lactantius, 95, 108
Lucian, 82, 99, 103, 105, 110

Marcion, 120
Messianic hope, 2 *f.*
Minucius Felix 99
Monasticism, 92, 150 *f.*
Montanism, 91 *f.*

Oblations at Eucharist, 118 *f.*, 160; for the dead, 109
Origen, 89, 93, 101, 105, 121
Orphans, 100, 171

Parabolani, 168
Pastoral Epistles, 37 *f.*
Paul, St., 25 *ff.*, 41 *ff.*
Paulinus of Nola, 162, 167, 175
Pestilence, care of victims of, 113 *f.*
Peter, Epistles of St., 71
Polycarp, 80, 82, 100, 122, 124
Prisoners, 104 *f.*, 172
Property, Church, 162 *f.*
Prophets, social teaching of, 1 *f.*

Roman Empire, unifying effect of, 11, 43
Rome, Church of, 78, 102, 107, 110, 111

Salvian, 132, 143, 174
Seneca, 10 *ff.*
"Seven," the, 23
Sick and poor, 101, 166
Slavery, 11, 33, 62 *f.*, 93 *f.*, 152, 173
Socrates (philosopher), 9; (historian), 175
Stips, 117
Stoicism, 10 *f.*, 43

Tertullian, 82, 98 *ff.*, 117 *ff.*
Theodosian Code, 128
Thessalonia, 26 *f.*
Tithes and firstfruits, 121, 165

Valens the presbyter, 82, 122, 124
Valentinian, 163, 167, 172

War, attitude towards, 96, 156
Wealth, estimate of, 5 *f.*, 37, 68 *f.*, 82 *f.*, 85 *f.*, 90, 145 *ff.*
Widows, 22, 39, 99 *f.*, 101, 123, 171 *f.*
Work a duty, 26, 60, 93, 103, 151; provision of, 102 *f.*

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